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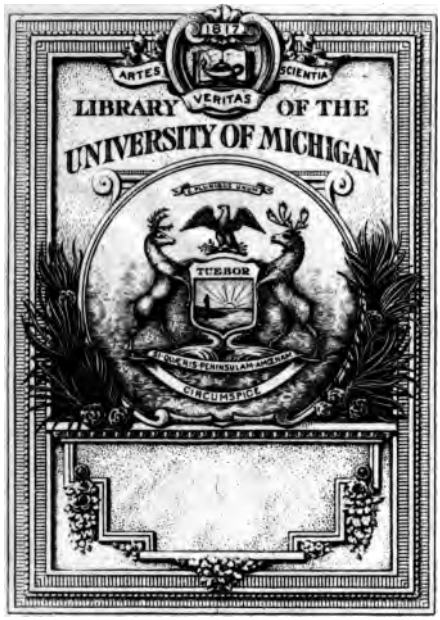
RICHARD · HOVEY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TO THE END OF THE TRAIL

RICHARD · HOVEY

EDITED WITH NOTES BY

MRS. RICHARD HOVEY

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1908

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With the exception of some unpublished plays, the present collection contains all the important remaining poems of Richard Hovey. All are here published in book form for the first time, except "Seaward." A few bibliographical notes have been added.

HENRIETTE HOVEY.

NEW YORK, *December, 1907.*

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TO THE END OF THE TRAIL

1880-1900

THE LAUREL

An Ode

to Mary Day Lanier

("The Laurel," written long ago and only printed by the author for his friends, was delayed from publication awaiting a projected volume which was to be dedicated to his mother and called "Odes and Hymns." This volume was never prepared, so that "The Laurel" is now first published for the general public. H.H.)

[*str. a.*

O Lady loved of our sweet sunrise singer
Whose name Song speaks with lingering of the lips,
Our laureate of the marshes, our light-bringer
Out of the darkness of fair Love's eclipse!
Out of the jar of ways that Trade has turned
Into a mart where Love may have no place
Save it be bought and sold,
A rare fair soul like a clear lamp burned
And shot through the mirk its sudden rays
And over the smoke-pit a glimmer of gold
Flashed and a voice, like the brook-note of a flute
That in its passioning still is pure and cool,
Or the clear sharp dropping of water into a pool
When all the woods are mute,
Spake and the sound thereof
Brake through the barrier,
Keen as the silver sword of the moon;
"Woe to the warrior

Liegeman of Love
Found, when the fighting
Grows fierce for the victor's boon,
Far from the foeman!
See where the dark hosts stay for our smiting!"
O gracious, queenly, softly-smiling woman!
Thee with his light and sweetness this man dowered,
To whom the laurel leaf of right belongs.
Ah me! and how should I
Take from thy hands the branch that greened and flowered
More beautifully, tangled in his hair,
Amid the city's flowerless throngs,
Than when beside the braes of Delaware
It swayed beneath the languid sky,
Ere it was honored, honoring his songs.

[*ant. a.*

Not unto me, not unto me, fair Lady—
I dare not let the sacred leaves be bound
About my brow. My song is all unready
So soon to seek so greatly to be crowned.
I would go find some sager singer—sure,
There are wise poets somewhere in the world—
And yield the wreath to him.
My song-flight yet is but insecure,
The blooms of my rose-tree scarce uncurled,
The blush of the blossoming faint and dim.

Ah, but I may not resign so the high crown
  Nor to another deliver its dear weight.
  Thou hast bound my brow with it, mine—crowned
      me in state—
Set me above Time's frown.
Not I may undo the deed
  Wrought by thee royally,
    Queen in thy right and the love of thy lord!
  Let me then loyally
Kneel in my need
And pray that Apollo
    Breathe wisdom into the word
  That my lips shall deliver.
So shall my song fly swift as the swallow
  To greet thee with its perfected endeavor,
Saying; "My lord that wrought me, sends me thee-
      ward,
  The late fulfilment of the labor thou
    Didst bind upon his youth."
As sea-gulls turn their singing flight to seaward,
I turn me to the mighty sea of song,
  Guiding the glad swerve of the prow
Of my light boat of melody down long
    Sea-ways of beauty, freedom, truth,
  Eastward where Day shall bare his rosy brow.

I take the lyre with steady hand [*ep. a.*
But reverent, knowing well how long
And bitter are the ways of song,
How few that reach its Promised Land.
I know my weakness and my strength;
I know that the toil will task me sore;
And, though glad and proud, I am made at length
More humble of heart than I was before.
For I felt, when my song was so o'er-requited,
As a maid when she first finds love and is still,
And my soul knelt down as a thrall new-knighted,
Abashed and wondering, weak to fulfil.
For he should be strong who shall wear this crown,
Wise and great-hearted, just to king and clown,
Sweet and serene and full of grace
And pure as Daphne ere the fatal race—
Daphne, the daughter of the river god,
Whose beauty was a pearl whose worth surpassed
The cruel wealth the Cretan's touch amassed.
But she loved more the woodland paths she trod
Untrammeled, than the rule of Hymen's rod,
And pleading many times for leave to cast
Her lot with virgin Artemis, at last
Won from her father the consenting nod.
And she and her maidens withdrew from the fret and the pother
Back to the home in the heart of the sweet rough mother,

Mother of all things, the earth, and drank of the crystalline chalice
She fills for her children that love her, a cup of refreshing and peace,
Chased the roe on the rocks and hunted the hart through the valleys,
Raced in sport through the groves with gowns kilted up to the knees,
Saw through the mists of the morning the gleam of the cold dawn shining,
Ranged through many a woodland and bathed in many a stream,
Wonderful, virginal, holy, aloof from desire and repining;
And Artemis smiled on the maidens and the days went fleet as a dream.

[*str.* β.

But Love, who saves and slays in a strange fashion,
Smote twain for this maid-queen of glens and glades.
Love pierced the great Apollo with keen passion,
And sent Leucippus masking with the maids.
It is an ill thing to contend with gods.
Leucippus did not long behold the light
In the leaves like sifted gold.
Lo, they have stripped him and beaten with rods,
Mocked him and cursed him and slain him quite.
But Daphne far from the strife sat cold,

Lone and unmoved, and the god came to her there,
Abashed, and lay at her feet and begged his bliss
With the lips Song sprang from, and sighed his soul for a kiss—
He, to whom kings made prayer.
So great Apollo sued;
But she, with her maiden heart
Fluttered and frayed as a bird in a snare,
Fled with fear-laden heart
Into the wood.
And Apollo up-leaping
And rent with desire and despair,
Sped after her, crying:
"Ah, leave me not, love, to lie widowed and weeping!
Oh, Daphne! Daphne!" and the sound went sighing,
"Oh, Daphne!" softlier through the echoing arches,
But the maid flees the swiftlier that the air
Shakes with that longing sound.
Swift, swift the sweet shape speeds between the larches!
Swift, swift the god pursues, and now is near
With arms outstretched to clasp! Despair
Spurs her—but love has faster feet than fear.
She hears his sandals smite the ground
And feels his breathing on her neck and hair.

[*ant.* β.

And now the glad god feels the grapes of joyance
  Bursting upon the palate of his soul.
A storm-like exultation, a mad buoyance
  Sweeps all the cords of life from his control.
But ere his lips touch hers, she gives one shrill
  Cry, and is heard; and the captor whose swift arms close
    About her like the dark,
Feels the throbs subside and the limbs grow still
  And the smooth breasts stiffen that fell and rose,
    And the ripe mouth roughen to bitter bark
Under the pressure of lips fierce for a kiss.
  "Ai, ai, me wretched!" the god mourns in his woe,
  "Ah, the sweet eyes closed and the fleet limbs fettered! And oh,
The fair life gone amiss!
Ah, the beauty! the grace!
  Ah, the delight of it!
    The fleet light flash of her flying feet!
  Never shall sight of it
Now flush my face
In near land or far land.
    Yet not wholly I lose thee, my sweet!
  On my brow, a dear burden,
Thy leaves shall be laid, my grief and my garland.
  For loss of love I am given a barren guerdon—

An austere crown for raptures hymeneal.
And ever henceforth he whom my lovers laud,
Shall wear this sacred leaf—
The Daphne of his unattained Ideal
Imperishably laurelled in his hair.
And now I go. My feet have trod
A weary way. I see Fate does not spare
Even to the Immortals failure and grief.
I also have my duties, though a god."

[*ep.* β.

Spirit of beauty, not without
A hidden sorrow at thy heart
We fable thee,—though what thou art
In truth, we cannot choose but doubt,—
For all the beauty that we know
Is pierced with a secret sense of pain,
And not till the time-floods cease to flow
Can the sad and sweet be cleft in twain.
O grand Greek god!—for I hold it true,
That strange myth blown from the Doric sea—
O bay-bound brow that so well I knew,
When faith was an easy thing to me!
Bright god of song! Strong lord of light!
Earth and the sea take beauty at thy sight;
The Python shrivels, pierced with thy lance;
And the dead rise at thy life-giving glance.

Spirit of beauty, born of the divine breath
With its first issuance into Time and Space!
Shaping the whole creation into grace
Through intimate interflux of life and death!
Lifting the transient, as it anguisheth,
To the serene wherein change hath no place!
High Son of God, that lookest on God's face!
Supremest angel that God uttereth!
Make me a flute for thy lips, a lute for thy fingers!
Take me, O lord of the lyre,—the least of thy singers,
Least of the voices that follow thee, lured from thy feet by none other,
Least of thy servants, Apollo, whose wages are sunlight and tears—
Take me to rest in thy deeps, as a child at the breast of its mother,
Give me the peace of thy kiss and strength for the strife of the years!
Bitter and sweet are thy gifts. Thou hast borne me aloft as a feather
That the wind blows hither and thither till it falls in the foam of the sea;
Thou hast given me haven and home; thou hast given me wind and rough weather;
And I lift thee my heart for a lyre, for the gifts thou hast given to me.

[*str.* γ.

Behold, of him unto whom much is given,
  Much is required. It is a fearful thing
To be a poet. How shall he be shriven,
  If greed or fear restrain his uttering?
Oh, ill for him, whoever he may be,
  Who looks upon the glory of the night
    And is not glad of heart!
Behold, he hath eyes and he doth not see!
  How shall his soul see the very light?
    Shall he ever emerge from the mirk of the mart?
Ay, but if he whom the high gods have ordained
  Their priest, speak not the truth that his eye shall see,
  There shall be no spirit in hell so scourged as he—
No soul so self-disdained.
Woe to the chosen one,
  Lured from his lonely way,
    Bullied or bribed to abandon the shrine!
  There is one only way—
None other—none.
Lady, whose bay-flowers
    I wear for a fear and a sign,
  If the world should beguile me
With music and masking and glitter of gay flowers,
  Then I could not reply, should'st thou revile me,

Wordless and more in high contempt than ire.
  Ay, even if, feeling at sight of the sweet goal
    Mine own unworthiness,
I should delay to seize the seven-tongued lyre,
Lest I should do its sacred strings some wrong,
  Thou might'st well leave me with small dole
And he who is the Virgil to my song,
    Scorning my timorous distress,
Might well reproach the vileness of my soul.

[*ant.* γ.

There is so much that I would fain be singing,
  I know not if my voice may fail, my friend,
Nor if the years may ever see me bringing
  My lyric labors to a tranquil end.
The new world, rising from its fiery death,
  Spreads its strong, phoenix-wings for sunward flight,
    Impatient of the past.
The Trade-snake belches his foul black breath
  From a thousand throats and the throng takes fright.
    And cowers and the sky is overcast.
Hark, but the hurry of hoof-beats in the air!
  The new Bellerophon of the unborn years!
  And his cry rings out like a victor's shout in our ears,

Piercing the monster's lair.
Song is the steed he rides,
  Wisdom the bridle-rein.
    Who shall withstand him? Who shall delay?
  Not with an idle rein
Grimly he guides.
Death for the dragon!
    For men, where a fen was, a way
  For the footing of freemen!
Then shall the poets pour us a flagon,
  Sweet as rain to the throats of ship-wrecked seamen,
And the spent world shall draw a freer breath,—
  Though still may men see Faith as one astray,
    And Hope with weary eyes,
And wan Love beating at the gates of Death.
Wise eyes shall pierce the darkness with sweet scorn
  And wise lips clarion our way
Through ever loftier portals of the morn,
    With lark-songs greatening as they rise
  In the large glories of the coming day.

[*ep.* γ.

For surely from the childing night
  That labors in a God's birth-throes,
  Shall come at last dawn's baby-rose,
The potency of perfect light.

I see the seraph of the years,
  Asleep in the womb of the Lord's intent,
And the ripple of laughter in his ears
  Is seen on his face as a great content.
And the wise lips smile and the grand brow flushes
  For joy at the joy that his own arm brings,
Like a smile of May when the wild rose blushes.
  And deep in the thicket the wood-thrush sings.
I see him at rest on the rim of Time,
Stretched on the cloud-rack, couchant and sublime,
And the swift white sword at his side, half-drawn,
Flashes a distant glimmer of the dawn.
I see, though darkly, what my spirit sought;
  I see what is, beneath what comes and goes;
  I see the sweet unfolding of the rose,
By changeless influence to full beauty brought;
I hear the symphony intricately wrought;
  Dim meanings swell through deep adagios
  And underneath the myriad chords disclose
The perfect act of God that changeth not.
Behold, He is other than earth and transcendeth its seeming;
Behold, He is one with the earth and the earth is His dreaming.
Soul of the world, say the sages; yea, sooth, but not bound in a prison,
  For the soul dwelleth not in the body, but the body doth dwell in the soul.

O Holy of Holies! Inscrutable! Ageless! through Thee have we risen;
Thou art, but our being is yearning,—we are not save as parts of Thy whole.
Only by cleaving to Thee have Thy creatures the life that rejoices,
Knowing itself to be, verily; the rest is but seeming to be;
And the whole world, groaning in travail, cries out with its manifold voices,
"O Lord, in Thee have we trusted; there is no life but in Thee!"

SEAWARD

AN ELEGY ON THE DEATH OF THOMAS WILLIAM PARSONS

"Il tremolar della marina."—DANTE.

THE tide is in the marshes. Far away
In Nova Scotia's woods they follow me,
Marshes of distant Massachusetts Bay,
Dear marshes, where the dead once loved to be!
I see them lying yellow in the sun,
And hear the mighty tremor of the sea
Beyond the dunes where blue cloud shadows run,

I know that there the tide is coming in,
  Secret and slow, for in my heart I feel
The silent swelling of a stress akin;
  And in my vision, lo! blue glimpses steal
Across the yellow marsh-grass, where the flood,
  Filling the empty channels, lifts the keel
Of one lone catboat bedded in the mud.

The tide is in the marshes. Kingscroft fades;
  It is not Minas there across the lea;
But I am standing under pilgrim shades
  Far off where Scituate lapses to the sea.
And he, my elder brother in the muse,
  The poet of the Charles and Italy,
Stands by my side, Song's gentle, shy recluse.

The hermit thrush of singers, few might draw
  So near his ambush in the solitude
As to be witness of the holy awe
  And passionate sweetness of his singing mood
Not oft he sang, and then in ways apart,
  Where foppish ignorance might not intrude
To mar the joy of his sufficing art.

Only for love of song he sang, unbid
  And unexpectant of responsive praise;
But they that loved and sought him where he hid
  Forbearing to profane his templed ways,

Went marveling if that clear voice they heard
  Pass thrilling through the hushed religious maze
Were of a spirit singing or a bird.

Alas, he is not here, he will not sing;
  The air is empty of him evermore.
Alone I watch the slow kelp-gatherers bring
  Their dories full of sea-moss to the shore.
No gentle eyes look out to sea with mine,
  No gentle lips are uttering quaint lore,
No hand is on my shoulder for a sign.

Far, far, so far, the crying of the surf!
  Still, still, so still, the water in the grass!
Here on the knoll the crickets in the turf,
  And one bold squirrel barking, seek, alas,
To bring the swarming summer back to me.
  In vain—my heart is on the salt morass
Below, that stretches to the sunlit sea.

Interminable, not to be divined,
  The ocean's solemn distances recede;
A gospel of glad color to the mind,
  But for the soul a voice of sterner creed.
The sadness of unfathomable things
  Calls from the waste and makes the heart give heed
With answering dirges, as a seashell sings.

Mother of infinite loss! Mother bereft!
Thou of the shaken hair! Far-questing Sea!
Sea of the lapsing wail of waves! O left
Of many lovers! Lone, lamenting Sea!
Desolate, proud, disheveled, lost sublime!
Unquelled and reckless! Mad, despairing Sea!
Wail, for I wait—wail, ancient dirge of Time!

No more, no more that brow to greet, no more!
Mourn, bitter heart! mourn, fool of Fate! Again
Thy lover leaves thee; from thy pleading shore
Swept far beyond the caverns of the rain,
No phantom of him lingers on the air.
Thy foamy fingers reach for his—in vain!
In vain thy salt breath searches for his hair!

Mourn gently, tranquil marshes, mourn with me!
Mourn, if acceptance so serene can mourn!
Grieve, marshes, tho' your noonday melody
Of color thrill through sorrow like a horn
Blown far in Elfland! Mourn, free-wandering dunes.
For he has left you of his voice forlorn,
Who sang your slopes full of an hundred Junes.

O viking Death, what hast thou done with him?
Sea-wolf of Fate, marauder of the shore!
Storm reveler, to what carousal grim
Hast thou compelled him? Hark, through the Sea's roar

Heroic laughter mocking us afar!
  There will no answer come for evermore,
Though for his sake Song beacon to a star.

Mourn, Muse beyond the sea! Ausonian Muse!
  Mourn, where thy vinelands watch the day depart!
Mourn for him, where thy sunsets interfuse,
  Who loved thy beauty with no alien heart
And sang it in his not all alien line!
  Muse of the passionate thought and austere art!
O Dante's Muse! lament his son and thine.

And thou, divine one of this western beach!
  A double loss has left thee desolate;
Two rooms are vacant in thy House of Speech,
  Two ghosts have vanished through the open gate.
The Attic spirit, epicure of light,
  The Doric heart, strong, simple, passionate,
Thy priest of Beauty and thy priest of Right.

Last of the elder choir save one whose smile
  Is gentler, for its memories, they rest.
Mourn, goddess, come apart and mourn awhile!
  Come with thy sons, lithe Song-Queen of the
      West,—
The poet Friend of Poets, the great throng
  Of seekers on the long elusive quest,
And the lone voice of Arizonian song.

Nor absent they, thy latest-born, O Muse,
My young companions in Art's wildwood ways;
She whose swift verse speaks words that smite and bruise
With scarlet suddenness of flaming phrase,
Virginia's hawk of Song; and he who sings
Alike his people's homely rustic lays,
And his fine spirit's high imaginings,

Far-stretching Indiana's melodist;
Quaint, humorous, full of quirks and wanton whims,
Full throated with imagination kissed;
With these two pilgrims from auroral streams.
The Greek revealer of Canadian skies,
And thy close darling, voyager of dreams,
Carman, the sweetest, strangest voice that cries.

And thou, friend of my heart, in fireside bonds
Near to the dead, not with the poet's bay
Brow-bound but eminent with kindred fronds,
Paint us some picture of the summer day
For his memorial—the distant dune,
The marshes stretching palpitant away
And blue sea fervid with the stress of noon.

For we were of the few who knew his face,
Nor only heard the rumor of his fame;
This house beside the sea the sacred place
Where first with thee to clasp his hand I came—

Art's knight of courtesy, eager to commend,
  Who to my youth accorded the dear name
Of poet, and the dearer name of friend.

Ah, that last bottle of old Gascon wine
  We drank together! I remember too
How carefully he placed it where the shine
  Of the warm sun might pierce it through and
      through,—
Wise in all gentle, hospitable arts—
  And there was sunshine in it when we drew
The cork and drank, and sunshine in our hearts.

O mourners by the sea, who loved him most!
  I watch you where you move, I see you all;
Unmarked I glide among you like a ghost,
  And on the portico, in room and hall,
Lay visionary fingers on your hair.
  You do not feel their unsubstantial fall
Nor hear my silent tread, but I am there.

I would my thought had but the weakest throat,
  To set the air a-vibrate with a word.
Alas! dumb, ineffectual, remote,
  I murmur, but my solace is not heard;
Nor, could I reach you, would your grief abate.
  What sorrow ever was with speech deterred?
What power has Song against the hand of Fate? . . .

Not all in vain! For with the will to serve,
  Myself am served, at least. A secure calm
Soars in my soul with wings that will not swerve,
  And on my brow I feel a ministering palm.
Even in the effort for another's peace
  I have achieved mine own. I hear a psalm
Of angels, and the grim forebodings cease.

I see things as they are, nor longer yield
  To truce and parley with the doubts of sense.
My certainty of vision goes a-field,
  Wide-ranging, fearless, into the immense;
And finds no terror there, no ghost nor ghoul,
  Not to be dazzled back to impotence,
Confronted with the indomitable soul.

What goblin frights us? Are we children, then,
  To start at shadows? Things fantastic slay
The imperishable spirit in whose ken
  Their only birth is? Blaze one solar ray
Across the grisly darkness that appals,
  And where the gloom was murkiest, the bright Day
Laughs with a light of blosmy coronals.

Stretch wide, O marshes, in your golden joy!
  Stretch ample, marshes, in serene delight!
Proclaiming faith past tempest to destroy,
  With silent confidence of conscious might!

Glad of the blue sky, knowing nor wind nor rain
  Can do your large indifference despite,
Nor lightning mar your tolerant disdain!

The fanfare of the trumpets of the sea
  Assaults the air with jubilant foray;
The intolerable exigence of glee
  Shouts to the sun and leaps in radiant spray;
The laughter of the breakers on the shore
  Shakes like the mirth of Titans heard at play,
With thunders of tumultuous uproar.

Playmate of terrors! Intimate of Doom!
  Fellow of Fate and Death! Exultant Sea!
Thou strong companion of the Sun, make room!
  Let me make one with you, rough comrade Sea!
Sea of the boisterous sport of wind and spray!
  Sea of the lion mirth! Sonorous Sea!
I hear thy shout, I know what thou wouldst say.

Dauntless, triumphant, reckless of alarms,
  O Queen that laughest Time and Fear to scorn!
Death, like a bridegroom, tosses in thine arms.
  The rapture of your fellowship is borne
Like music on the wind. I hear the blare,
  The calling of the undesisting horn,
And tremors as of trumpets on the air.

Sea-Captain of whose keels the Sea is fain,
  Death, Master of a thousand ships, each prow
That sets against the thunders of the main
  Is lyric with thy mirth. I know thee now,
O Death, I shout back to thy hearty hail,
  Thou of the great heart and cavernous brow,
Strong Seaman at whose look the north winds quail.

Poet, thou hast adventured in the roar
  Of mighty seas with one that never failed
To make the havens of the further shore.
  Beyond that vaster Ocean thou hast sailed
What old immortal world of beauty lies!
  What land where Light for matter has prevailed!
What strange Atlantid dream of Paradise!

Down what dim bank of violets did he come,
  The mild historian of the Sudbury Inn,
Welcoming thee to that long-wished-for home?
  What talk of comrades old didst thou begin?
What dear inquiry lingered on his tongue
  Of the Sicilian, ere he led thee in
To the eternal company of Song?

There thy co-laborers and high compeers
  Hailed thee as courtly hosts some noble guest,—
Poe, disengloomed with the celestial years,
  Calm Bryant, Emerson of the antique zest

And modern vision, Lowell all a-bloom
  At last, unwintered of his mind's unrest,
And Whitman, with the old superb aplomb.

Not far from these Lanier, deplored so oft
  From Georgian live-oaks to Acadian firs,
Walks with his friend as once at Cedarcroft.
  And many more I see of speech diverse;
From whom a band aloof and separate,
  Landor and Meleager in converse
And lonely Collins for thy greeting wait.

But who is this that from the mightier shades
  Emerges, seeing whose sacred laureate hair
Thou startest forward trembling through the glades,
  Advancing upturned palms of filial prayer?
Long hast thou served him; now, of lineament
  Not stern but strenuous still, thy pious care
He comes to guerdon. Art thou not content?

Forbear, O Muse, to sing his deeper bliss,
  What tenderer meetings, what more secret joys!
Lift not the veil of heavenly privacies!
  Suffice it that nought unfulfilled alloys
The pure gold of the rapture of his rest,
  Save that some linger where the jarring noise
Of earth afflicts, whom living he caressed.

His feet are in thy courts, O Lord; his ways
  Are in the City of the Living God.
Beside the eternal sources of the days
  He dwells, his thoughts with timeless lightings
    shod;
His hours are exaltations and desires,
  The soul itself its only period
And life unmeasured save as it aspires.

Time, like a wind, blows through the lyric leaves
  Above his head, and from the shaken boughs
Æonian music falls; but he receives
  Its endless changes in alert repose,
Nor drifts unconscious as a dead leaf blown
  On with the wind and senseless that it blows,
But hears the chords like armies marching on.

About his path the tall swift angels are,
  Whose motion is like music but more sweet;
The centuries for him their gates unbar;
  He hears the stars their *Glorias* repeat;
And in high moments when the fervid soul
  Burns white with love, lo! on his gaze replete
The Vision of the Godhead shall unroll—

Trine within trine, inextricably One,
  Distinct, innumerable, inseparate,
And never ending what was ne'er begun,

Within Himself his Freedom and his Fate,
All dreams, all harmonies, all Forms of light
In his Infinity intrinsecate,—
Until the soul no more can bear the sight.

Oh, secret, taciturn, disdainful Death!
Knowing all this, why hast thou held thy peace?
Master of Silence, thou wilt waste no breath
On weaklings, nor to stiffen nerveless knees
Deny strong men the conquest of one qualm;—
And they, thy dauntless comrades, are at ease
And need no speech and greet thee calm for calm.

Cast them adrift in wastes of ageless Night,
Or bid them follow into Hell, they dare;
So are they worthy of their thrones of light,
O that great, tranquil rapture they shall share!
That life compact of adamantine fire!
My soul goes out across the eastern air
To that far country with a wild desire! . . .

But still the marshes haunt me; still my thought
Returns upon their silence, there to brood
Till the significance of earth is brought
Back to my heart, and in a sturdier mood
I turn my eyes toward the distance dim,
And in the purple far infinitude
Watch the white ships sink under the sea-rim;

Some bound for Flemish ports or Genovese,
  Some for Bermuda bound, or Baltimore;
Others, perchance, for further Orient seas,
  Sumatra and the straits of Singapore,
Or antique cities of remote Cathay,
  Or past Gibraltar and the Libyan shore
Through Bab-el mandeb eastward to Bombay;

And one shall signal flaming Teneriffe,
  And the Great Captive's ocean-prison speak,
Then on beyond the demon-haunted cliff,
  By Madagascar's palms and Mozambique.
Till in some sudden tropic dawn afar
  The Sultan sees the colors at her peak
Salute the minarets of Zanzibar.

KINGSCROFT, *Windsor, Nova Scotia, September, 1892.*

A VISION OF PARNASSUS

TO MIRIAM

"A Vision of Parnassus" was originally published as the Dedication to Launcelot and Guenevere, but on second thought I have felt that it was a not entirely congruous part of a series of dramatic poems. I have therefore transferred it to this volume. RICHARD HOVEY.

(The proposed volume was abandoned for other plans. So many have questioned whether this poem was purely metaphorical or partly personal that it seems best to state here that it was addressed to a beautiful personality of his early acquaintance.)

GOD, in whose being only we become
  And in whose wisdom only we grow wise,
Eternal Love! first unto Thee I come,
  First unto Thee I lift adoring eyes.
Before Thy face the prophet's speech is air,
  In songs of praise the only music lies,
The only wisdom in the lips of prayer.

To Thee, Allfather, come I, as a son
  Who goes upon his father's business
In distant lands, might ask a benison
  Upon his errand. Be Thou nigh to bless
And let Thy sweetness in my heart abound,
  Else all my labor is a weariness
And all my singing but an empty sound.

And thou, divine Apollo, hear my cry,
  Thou brightness of the glory of the Lord!
Thou art the wings with which my song must fly,
  The breathing of its lips must be thy word,
Its vision be the clearness of thy seeing,
  If in that heaven for which its thought has soared,
It would at last serenely have its being.

Master of poets, hear me as I call!
  Circumfluent air wherethrough I take my flight,
Withdraw thou not from me nor let me fall,
  Failing thy buoyance, into the void night!
Upbear me on thy bosom as a bird!
  Apollo! lord of beauty and of light!
Thee I invoke! Oh, let my cry be heard!

For I at least still worship at thy shrine,
  Though the blind world forgets thee; I at least
Have given thee thought for meat and love for wine,
  Although thy temples stand without a priest
And no one seeks the sweet Pierian springs,
  While still Astarte hold her horrid feast
And Mammon's altars smoke with offerings.

But I have stood upon thy holy hill,
  And seen thy sacred laurel-blossoms blow,—
I found me in a glen beside a rill
  Of stainless waters whose pellucid flow

Sang not as other fountains, but with clear
  Articulate murmurs spake, distinct and low,
A secret teaching to my wondering ear.

Hard by the twin peaks of the mountain soared
  Like aspirations rising from the wood
To where the blue Greek heaven lay all outpoured,
  A living lake of liquid plenitude,
And clouds were wrapped about the crest of one,
  But clear against the sky the other stood,
Sharply defined and violet with the sun.

And longer had I listened to the lore
  Of that strange stream, but that there reached my
      ear
A woeful moan that made my heart ache sore,
  And, looking up, I saw a lady near
Who fled aghast as one in mortal dread,
  With drawn face rigid with a nameless fear,
And still her garments tripped her as she fled.

And hard upon her heels a horrid hound,
  With bloody jowl and mire upon his coat,
Came baying till he made the wood resound.
  There was a brazen collar on his throat,
With intricate antique deviced chased,
  And on that white-limbed lady did he gloat
With hungry eyes, in his malignant haste.

And I, all sudden starting to my feet,
  Weaponless as I was, would have pursued
That savage beast to save that lady sweet—
  But in my path a gentle stranger stood
With tranquil eyes that forced my feet to stay,
  And, as I marvelled, deep within the wood
The noise of that fell hunting died away.

"Not with the arm of flesh," the shade began,
  For not among the living was that stranger,
"Mayst thou attack the beast. No courage can
  Avail against his cruel strength. The danger
By other weapons must be combated.
  Till they are forged, he must remain a ranger,
To make this sacred wood a place of dread.

"Come with me up the hill a little space
  And I will speak more of these mysteries."
With that toward the peak he turned his face
  And we together passed among the trees,
And as I went, still wondering, at his side,
  I said to him, becoming more at ease,
"Who art thou, gentle spirit?" And he replied,

"I sang of that sad prince whose mother's guile
  Made the whole world a prison for his heart,
And of the meek magician of the isle;
  And many other matters craved my art,

When Raleigh quested for the golden shore."
At this, all suddenly I gave a start
And broke out "Master"—and could say no more.

By this we came into an open place
That made a little hollow in the hill;
And here I saw, as I upraised my face,
That which my spirit with such awe did fill
As the young priest might feel before the shrine,
First time he speaks the words at whose low thrill
God smites himself into the bread and wine.

For there was Dante, all his passionate face
Made glorious with that peace he long did seek.
Beside him Æschylus kept his Jove-like pace.
A little further off the wrinkled cheek
Of ancient Homer brushed almost the curled
Gold locks of David—Israelite and Greek,
Twin fountains of the music of the world!

And yet one more there was who toward my guide
Came smiling like the younger of two brothers—
The singer of that scholar who allied
The Devil to him and beheld the Mothers.
And to me, too, he turned him courteously.
In welcome, and he went on to the others,
Who gave me greeting with sweet gravity.

Then he who first encountered me, defeating
My rash speed, spoke with brief straightforwardness
And told them of the manner of our meeting,
And of the lady who was in such stress.
And then he laid his hand upon my hair—
And oh, the gentleness of that caress!—
Saying to me, "And thou didst find her fair!

"This is that lady whom I throned so high!
Alas, that she should be brought down so low!
Each morning from that horror she must fly,
Each morning be devoured by that fell foe;
Yet ever when the new day quickeneth,
Again she must renew her ancient woe—
Perpetual struggle and perpetual death!

"If thou wilt be her knight, set forth with care,
For thou shalt find a foe in every tree,
To cast a venomed arrow unaware.
But if thou lovest and art brave, then be
Regardless of the shafts against thee hurled—
Set free the lady and thou shalt set free
Thyself as well and with thyself the world.

"Not as a warrior undertake this vow,
But in the sacred vestments of a priest.

Song is more perilous than steel. Seek thou
  Until the Song-God's temple-doors thou seest
And from the altar take his sword. Then follow
  Thy quest and do thy battle with the beast,
Panoplied in the armor of Apollo."

Then, as one who has climbed a mountain peak,
  Sees at first glance the outspread world upstart,
Valley and lake and hill, but does not seek
  As yet so isolate each several part,
A-gaze in contemplation of the whole,
  So all my song came rushing on my heart
And as a flame joy flashed up in my soul.

And as a flame that flashes and goes out,
  So all that rapture quickly sank and died,
For that great theme benumbed me with misdoubt
  If I, in truth, were strong enough to guide
The chariot of so intricate a rhyme.
  "Alas, this quest is not for me," I sighed.
"Master, why point me where I cannot climb?

"The tragic laurel is not for my head—
  A simple singer, artless and unwise."
Thereat the Tuscan turned to me and said
  Gravely, all Beatrice in his eyes,
"And art thou worthy, then, of Miriam?"
  And I was dumb a moment for surprise
And my heart said, "Unworthy, indeed, I am."

But shame, as for a creaven thought, gave place
To high resolve with awesome wonderment,
And "I will sing," I said, and, full of grace,
Those spirits smiled on me as well content.
Therewith they took leave of that greenery,
And with them through the glades I also went—
I was the seventh of that company.

O thou in whom all womanhood is mine!
O thou in whom I praise all womanhood!
Miriam, the honor of my song is thine.
It was the sweet sound of thy name subdued
My lips to breathe their too adventurous theme.
O fair enwomaning of the Sweet and Good!
A sweetest thought to me in God's long dream!

I cannot praise thee rightly as I ought,
Nor tell by what high miracle it is
That thou, who art so marvellously wrought,
Shouldst be the spirit that should meet and kiss
My spirit in this bond of soul and sense
From which begin all other unities
Of wider scope but impact less intense.

I praise in thee all force, in thee all form,
For these in thee may best be understood;
I praise all life, because thy cheek is warm;
I praise all will, because thy will is good;

I praise in thee my country and my kin;
  In thee the otherness of womanhood;
In thee all hearts that Love is welcome in.

The things that lie without us, are but curled
  And unsubstantial smoke-wreaths to the sight;
Thou art the point at which I touch the world,
  The point thou touchest, I—thus benedight!
This is the mystery of the law by which
  The ordered spirit-multitudes unite
In diapasons manifold and rich.

So lies the world in little in thy heart,
  And so I praise and love all things in thee.
Yet chiefly for thine own sweet self, my art
  Strives to build up its tower of harmony.
Chiefly for thy sweet self I pour my life
  As myrrh and spikenard on thy head, to be
A chrism to do thee honor, Queen and Wife.

For all the songs that all the poets sing
  Were not too great an honor for thy worth,
Seeing thou art the source from which songs spring.
  And all the crowns and kingdoms of the earth,
Glory of Bourbon and renown of Guelph,
  Would only serve thy royalty for mirth,
Seeing thou art crowned more highly, being thyself.

O sweet as only vigor can be sweet!
  O strong as only loveliness is strong!
I come before thee with unsandaled feet,
  As one escaping from the chaffering throng
Draws nigh an altar, and with bended knee
  Devote myself, the singer to the song,
And song and singer each alike to thee.

II

SHORT BEACH

Oh, the salt wind in my nostrils!
And the white sail in the creek!
And the blue beyond the marshes!
And the flag at the peak!

My soul lifts to the bugles
Of a far cry on the breeze—
The cry of my storm-kin calling
Overseas, overseas!

Blow, horns of the old sea-rapture!
When your call comes from afar.
I would rise from the grave to reach you
Where the sea-dooms are!

July, 1898.

THE GYPSY

I found her in a gypsy camp
Between the night and morning.
I was a roving, loving scamp,
She was a child of morning.

She had the wood-dew in her hair,
The road-dust on her feet,
The sting and thrill of mountain air
Made all her motion sweet.

She moved with something like the grace
Of migratory birds.
The wander-longing in her face
Was like forgotten words.

THE ORIENT

A FRAGMENT

* * * The sleet of battle and the hurricane of drums
Blight for a while the calm chrysanthemums,
To clear the air
For the new April that engenders there.
But though her strenuous to-morrow
Get from the West a heritage of sorrow,
Shall not the spirit of Japan
Transmute the urge, the bitterness, the moan,
To some great bloom of beauty yet unknown
To meet the vision of the coming man?

India, a Sabine bride,
About the hearthstone of her ravisher
Sets up her household gods; and at her side
His children learn of her.
And surely in her bosom, too, there lies
A mystery unborn.
Ay, surely, an apocalyptic morn,
In Vishnu-land an avatar shall rise.

And the West is with child of the East and the travail is long,
A travail of song.
And the East is with child of the West and the travail is sore,
A travail of war. * * *

May, 1896.

À STEPHANE MALLARMÉ

A FRAGMENT

On battlemented Morningside
The gold alembic days distil,
The violet rocks remember yet
The winter winds that moaned and sighed.
The grasses and the leaves are still.

DISCOVERY

A FRAGMENT

ACT III

Scene.—*Mid-Ocean, on board the Santa Maria.* COLUMBUS, NINO, ROLDAN, MATHEOS, *near the man at the wheel. About the deck and in the forecastle Sailors, among them* GIACOMO, *the*

boatswain, TALLARTE, SEBASTIAN *and* WILLIAM IRES.

COLUMBUS.

Steersman, hold straight into the west.

NINO.

The birds

Fly southward, sir.

COLUMBUS.

They do.

NINO.

They seem land-birds, sir.

COLUMBUS.

And seek the land. I think it probable
Some island lies there, Nino.

NINO.

Your pardon, sir,

But why hold course to westward if the land
Be in the south?

COLUMBUS.

The land is in the west.

Haphazard islets in the middle sea
May rise leagues from the mainland. Not for such
Have we outsailed the Carthaginian dream
And pierced the sea of glooms. Steersman, I say,
Hold straight into the west.

Enter DE ARANA *and some of the royal staff.*
COLUMBUS *goes to meet them.*

MATHEOS.

What say you, Roldan?
Does he not carry it right hidalgo-like,
Our paper grandee, Admiral of the clouds,
And viceroy of the moon?

ROLDAN.

We whom he promised gold, this Genovese,
We shall go back to beg for copper sous
About the streets of Seville.

NINO.

Back, my masters!
Now, by St. James, I would that day were here,
For I am fearsome it will never dawn.

ROLDAN.

What mean you?

NINO.

Shall we evermore see Spain again?
I have served twenty captains in my life,
And but one madman. Have ye ne'er heard tales
Of phantom ships that seek to make a port
And fail forever?

MATHEOS.

We see Spain again;
The order's ta'en for that.

ROLDAN.

Be still! The Joker!

NINO.

Sirs, what's afoot?

MATHEOS.

Which do you set the higher,
Life and Castile or this Italian Boaster?

NINO.

I ne'er feared death in a fair fight, my mates,
But who will pour his life out for a whim
Or strive with the Devil knows what! Have you seen naught
O' nights upon your watch, strange and unnatural?

MATHEOS.

What, you have seen it, too?

NINO.

And you have seen it?

ROLDAN.

The needle?

NINO.

Ay, it points no longer north——

MATHEOS.

Or else the Pole-star wavers from its place;

NINO.

But if the eternal sky is still secure

Then there's some hellish hocus-pocus here
That makes the iron veer toward the west
As if some magnet greater than the Pole
Lay yonder where we steer; that Mount Magnetic
That like the Kraken of the North devours
The ocean leagues like grass, and which men say
Sucks out the rivets of the stoutest ships
Letting them melt into their elements
Like frostwork in the sun.

ROLDAN.

Be still, I say;
Here comes the Genovese!

MATHEOS.

More words with you.

(*They draw apart;* COLUMBUS *and* DE ARANA *on the port side.*)

COLUMBUS.

And still holds fair, you see.

DE ARANA.

True, sir, and yet
Uneasily I shift my thought about
With something, I confess, of awe,—well, fear,
Fear, if you will!

COLUMBUS.

You say it, De Arana,
Not I.

DE ARANA.

How far the loneliness recedes!
The weight o' the stillness stifles!

COLUMBUS.

We are the first
Except the angels who have looked upon
The silence of this sea—and yet behold
How beautiful it is! Ocean and sky
Tremble with heat and color; each light vapour
Encrimsons with the sun, and the clear deeps
Let the light plunge down fathoms undersea,
Where the strange embryo life of Ocean moves
As on the first day when the spirit of God
Was brooding on the waters. Oh, it is good
To know the secrets of this world! And I
Believe, Arana, nay I know, the day
Nears when God's wisdom shall reveal to us
What no man yet has seen or dreamed on earth,
Scholar or seaman. I seem to feel already
The far-off power of equatorial suns
And dim foretokens of the austral sky.

(*He retires, and seeks the lookout.*)

DE ARANA.

He dreams, he dreams—even as he dreamed in Spain,
While the court mocked and whispered. Now almost

I do believe him, who so mightily
Believes himself. I am his kinsman—half—
Through Beatrix! If I break faith with Pinzon,
Who is but my countryman, and rip the mask
From this revolt that threats to make this night
An end of all his dreams!
I have good will to it. Break faith with Pinzon?
What's that but keep faith with the Genovese?
Bah, I dream, too! The crews are as one man
And will not venture farther. Who is he
That can compel them? Though the receding West
Held Edens for his Indies, Founts of youth
And trees of life for gems and mines of gold,
He stands alone. Well, well! When all is said,
I shall be glad, for one, to be in Spain.
Giacomo!

GIACOMO.

(*Approaching.*) Ay, sir.

DE ARANA.

Yet no land?

GIACOMO.

Nor would be
If we sailed on for ever.

DE ARANA.

Is 't to-night?

GIACOMO.

Ay, sir.

DE ARANA.

The signal?

GIACOMO.

The boatswain's whistle, sir. The Pinta and the Nina run along side at nightfall, as soon as the commander goes below for his devotion.

SANCHEZ.

(*Who has drawn near from behind.*) Ay, his Angelus—or his Diabolus, for I am sure the devil is in this wind that blows always with his desires.

GIACOMO.

You say well, sir. We are all agreed there is sorcery in 't.

SANCHEZ.

Or else there blow no winds for Spain in these waters.

DE ARANA.

Well, well!—But when he is saying his prayers, be they to angel or devil, what then?

GIACOMO.

Why, sir, then I pipe all hands on deck, and before Windbags knows what's up, the Captains Pinzon and their crews have boarded us.

SANCHEZ.

It is near nightfall now.

GIACOMO.

Ay, sir, and the dark comes on here like the blowing out of a light in a cellar.

DE ARANA.

Or a tomb. The sun sets, and Night stalks over the sea in seven league boots.

GIACOMO.

We come too near her dwelling place.

WILLIAM IRES.

(*In a group of sailors on the starboard side.*) Eh, mates, but I'm of another mind. Faith, I think there's land ahead, but we've passed it. Didn't the blessed St. Brandon sail into the west and discover a land so beautiful that he never came back again? And by the same token he was an Irishman.

TALLARTE.

He must have been. That is a very Irish story.

IRES.

That's your Saxon envy, Tallarte de Lajes. It takes more than a Spanish name to hide an English dunderhead.

TALLARTE.

If your old bog-trotting saint discovered something, why don't anybody know it?

IRES.

Faith he kept it to himself, and that's the chief pleasure of a discovery.

TALLARTE.

Then I suppose you're for going ahead.

IRES.

I am, with the ship turned around—

GIACOMO.

(*Who has joined them.*) Who talks of going ahead?

TALLARTE.

William Ires.

IRES.

Who told you so? I said the old man was right in looking for land, for an Irishman and a saint found it before him. And that I will maintain. But I am in favour of going back, and listen you all, it is not because I am afraid—but because I am tired of sailing in one direction.

GIACOMO.

Corpo di Baccho, there may be land ahead worse than the sea—Listen, I have just overheard the mates saying that by a sure computation we should come in eight days more to a mountain made all of loadstone.

SEBASTIAN.

Mother of God!

GIACOMO.

And as soon as we come in sight of this mountain, the bolts will all fly out of their places and the ships sink into the sea.

SAILORS.

Oh, Oh!

SEBASTIAN.

And hark ye, Master Giacomo, I have been told by Moors, to whom the Devil has taught much forbidden knowledge, that in these parts dwelleth the great bird, Roc, whose wings darken the sky, and who grasps the largest frigate with his mighty talons as easily as an owl clutches a field-mouse. Then soaring up higher than the topmost clouds, tears it to atoms and drops them in the sea.

SAILORS.

Oh, oh!

GIACOMO.

Masters, this is a voyage of ill-fortune.

SAILORS.

Ay, that it is.

GIACOMO.

First, we set sail on a Friday.

A SAILOR.

No good ever came of beginning aught o' Friday.

GIACOMO.

Then there was the burning mountain.

SEBASTIAN.

Teneriffe!

GIACOMO.

Ay, Teneriffe, terrific, set in the sea
To warn the impious back that dare to press
Beyond the bounds of things! All night it flared,
Blazoning on the clouds tremendous dooms,
While from the dark we watched and trembled, Yet
This portent braved, and the long cutting through
The interminable net of magic herbs,
That strove to wind us in a woven charm,
Still lured by signs of land from league to league
Which still proved lying, till the very stars
Began to shift in heaven—(*Four bells.*)

COLUMBUS.

Steersman, hold straight into the West! *The Angelus.*

(*Silence, during which* COLUMBUS *disappears into the cabin. Here and there a sailor drops on his knees, crosses himself and prays.* GIACOMO *blows his whistle. Sailors silently come on deck from below—It darkens—The Pinta and Nina have come alongside.*)

Enter over the taffrail, PINZON, *and sailors.*

PINZON.

Seamen.

* * * * * * * *

PÈRE AMBROISE

Did you see the joy and peace of God's great grace
On her face!
Did you hear the calm still sainthood in her speak
Through her cheek?
Then that light of holy knowledge, clear and wise,
In her eyes?
—Ere her face was hid forever, chaste and pale,
By the veil,
Ere the vision and the glory and the light
Passed from sight,
Loving, trusting, God's own work that God had blessed,
Full of rest.

Yet she loved me in a fashion as I think.
Just a chink
In the lattice of her heart let through one day
One faint ray
Of the roselight of the morning of love's skies
On my eyes,
And the phantom of the roselight on her cheek
Bade me speak.
Had I spoken, had I fanned the spark aflame,
Would the same
Fate have fallen on us, think you, now we dree
—I and she?

But I stopped, even while my heart leaped with the mirth
Of love's birth,
Stopped—I thought I heard God's messenger somewhere
—In the air,
Was it?—bid unbuskin lest my footprints wound
Holy ground.
Sweet wise novice, she was seeking truer bliss,
Jesu's kiss.
I, God's consecrated priest, should I step in,
Thrust between
Her white soul and endless love my poor love-dower
Of an hour!

So I rushed away and left her standing there,
Tall and fair
As the angel when he stood by Mary's side,
Awed, and cried
"*Ave, plena gratia!*" seeing her fair sweet face,
Full of grace.
Holy Mother! may she never know the cause
Made me pause
So abruptly! Well, love's might-be in her breast
Slept unguessed
Save by me, and I—I left her, tall and fair,
Standing there.
Ah, the bitter tears I shed then, all alone,
Falling prone

Where the crucifix within the shadow hangs
-God's own pangs,
God's death shown in symbol, His heartache divine
Dwarfing mine
—At the priedieu in the corner of the room
In the gloom.
And I sobbed myself to silence, let heart break
For His sake,
As His Sacred Heart long since at Calvary
Broke for me.

I had taught her, I had poured into her ear
All the dear
Mystic wonder of the Love above all love,—
Tried to prove
To her pure faith, where no need of proof was, how
Man should now
Give the love back as completely as he can,
Being but man,
Pain for pain and blood for blood and strife for strife,
—Life for life.
How her face flushed—then grew paler than blown mist,
Rapt and whist!
No heat like the iron when it whitens!—so
When she'd show
That death-pallor in her cheek while eye-fires blazed,
Unamazed

I had seen her brave the Devil, stood he where
She must fare
Past him in the sheer high pathway that she trod
Leads to God,—
She had plunged her hand with Mutius in the flame,
Faced the shame
And the suffering, the spitting and the spear,
Without fear.

So I wakened in her heart the first desire
For the higher
Life of utter selflessness and sacrifice,
Saw arise
A great innocent fearlessness that made me fear,
Saw appear
Golden first-fruits of devotion ripening
In the spring
Of the new Christ-year whose Easter bade her then
Rise again;
And I loved her in her life of love and prayer
Unaware.

Unaware!—ah, but now the clouds withdrew
And I knew!—
Felt the might of love within me rend my heart,
Great drops start
From my body as I agonized, lying there,
In despair!

And I called upon her, murmured her sweet name
Should God claim
This of all things, more to me than all the gold
World could hold,
More than fame, power, victory in the dearest strife
—More than life!

More than God, I had almost said. But that wild thought
Stopped me—brought
Fear upon me—a great horror. Then light broke
Through the smoke
Round about me and I seemed to see God's plan
Chastening man.
"I, the Lord thy God, a jealous God, demand
Heart and hand
First for Me to labor, first love Me, My sway
First obey
—Mine your firstlings, Mine your first fruits, Mine your best
—Costliest!"

Was not she my dearest, best—fit sacrifice
In God's eyes,
Lest perchance her image leave nought in my heart
For His part?
Might it not be best for me to lose her here?
She so near,

God so far away in heaven, how should I not
Have forgot
God,—seeing the wondrous beauty of her hair,
And the fair
Angel face—and then the deeps, the mysteries
Of her eyes!

If I give her now to God, my pearl of price,
Greater thrice
In my eyes—ah, heaven!—than all else life has brought,
Shall He not,
In the yonder-world when I have burned away
All the clay
From my spirit and the gold alone remains,
Bless my pains
With this gift back from His hands that took to give?
"Die to live,"
Was His word of old. Dead love may, like dead men,
Rise again,—

Not to earth-life here, but at the Day of Days
In the place
Of God's dwelling, where reflections of the Trine
Union shine
Through innumerable unions, caught and bound
In one round

Up to Him and in Him by a mystery strange
That shall change
All the myrrh of sorrow offered at His shrine
Into Wine.
Shall God scorn a broken heart? Shall He despise
Sacrifice?

Then I looked up at the crucifix above—
God's great love
Broke upon me like a torrent whirling down
Tower and town
In its pathway,—and the mystery grew more clear
Symboled there.
What was man's poor love in 's farthest weariest reach,
—Loftiest niche
Man could statue in his heart's cathedral,—height
Of heart's flight,—
To God's love before the ages had begun
For His Son!

Holier than the holiest love that e'er the earth
Brought to birth,
Mary's for the Christ-child, burning brighter far
Than the star
Led the wise men—She our sea-star, beaconing,
So to bring
Us too with her to the Christ—she, who became
Heaven's Dame!—

Holier still and higher and swifter Thine,
Love Divine,
Outsoars Mary's even, far as hers outsoars
Height of ours.

Yet God gave His Son—O mystery that sleeps
In God's deeps!—
Let His infinite Love be tortured—pierced and torn—
Turned to scorn
For our sake—ay, even for this poor half-divine
Love of mine.
Now He asks me, shall I shrink to give Him thence
Recompense?
How the mist about me at this break of day
Cleared away
And God's meaning slowly, like the morning, stole
On my soul!

Yield you, bend your will to His will; who obeys,
Gets God's grace.
Though the Devil's pride within you still impel
To rebel,
Keeping back the day of God's fulfilment here,
Do not fear,—
Vanquished is victorious; freedom's self-defeat
Being complete,
Then the purpose of God's lesson is made known,
Hell's o'erthrown,

And submission lifts to higher liberty—
Love makes free.

If you yield you as the helpless knife obeys
Him that slays—.
As the senseless waters tumble down the hill,
Will or nill,
That's the Stoic, that benumbs you, makes you slave,
As Christ gave
Freedom, life for you, so give you with good will,
Then you fill
God's full cup of sacrifice to brim, and so
Come to know
God's way, act it, be it, so with God to be,
As God, free,—

Freedom, lost once, freely yielded at God's feet,
Now more sweet,
Found again at God's feet, past the ebb and flow,
In Heaven's glow.
See, God striving with me, I would not unclasp
My heart's grasp
Till He blessed me—then I rose and stole away. . . .
The next day
Made excuses—certain matters of import—
Well, in short,
That's the last I saw of her till twelve hours since.
I did wince

In the church there. How heart's embers burst to flame!
But I came
Back for that,—that last look. *Ite, missa est.* . . .
What a rest
In the stars! The lazy wind in the close beneath
Seems to breathe
A great quiet. That's like our love, sister—ours,
Peace embowers,
Calm and tender. See the moonlight's elfish play
On the bay. . . .
What a heavy scent of honeysuckle! . . . . So!
Let us go.

1887

A LYRIC

SUNSHINE of yellow hair
And still white trust,
What doest thou in this lair
Of death and dust?
The halls where I abide
Are dusk and dour,
And fearsome lurkers hide
By arch and door.

The ruins of my heart
Are lone and grim;
There strange companions start,
Hollow and dim,
In the deserted rooms
With wan despair—
What doest thou in these glooms,
Bonny and fair?

Ghosts of dead loves at night
Arise and walk;
Fear sears me like a blight
To hear them talk.
I never shall get free
Of their dead eyes.
That look they turn on me
Kills as it dies.

Inhabit not my soul,
O dream of dawn!
The dead have me in thrall,
Will not be gone,
Haunt me by ghostly stair
And shuddering gloom!
Leave me to seek them there
From room to room.

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY, 1899.

III

(In this group of earlier poems is the earliest printed work of Richard Hovey. "The Song of the Wind" and "Shakespeare" are selected from a book of verse written between the ages of ten and sixteen. They, with others, were printed by the author and a boy friend who had a toy printing press, in Washington in 1880.)

THE SONG OF THE WIND

I LOVE yon crystal lakelet,
  Her purity and peace;
I sing her love songs from the shore
  Amid the leafy trees—
A host of melancholy
  And mystic melodies.

I press my lips to her lips
  In the kiss my soul so craves,
Till she blushes into ripples
  And dimples into waves—
Till she dimples into eddies,
  And blushes into waves.

And, when the night has fallen,
  I sleep upon her breast,
For I weary of my burden
  Of odors and must rest—
For with surfeit of sweet odors
  My spirit is oppressed.

1879.

SHAKESPEARE

BRIGHT are the stars of the night;
  Fair is each twinkling ray;
But at the earliest light
  Of morning they vanish away—
But with the sun's dawning beam
  Like ghosts they vanish away.

Sweet-voiced are the bards of our tongue,
  And melody floats in each lay;
But, gazing on poetry's sun,
  Their memory fadeth away—
Their fame and their memory fadeth
  As the stars at the dawning of day.

1879.

MER-EN-MUT

"WHAT a delicate odor of spice!" I said
  And I looked where the cloths they had just unwrapped
Left bare the blackened form of the dead
  —Three thousand years since her life had speed!

Faint as the dying notes of a lute
  When the fingers have ceased to touch the strings!
What had sound or scent to do with that mute
  Dry dust—the life-tree's Dead-Sea fruit!

It came like the subtile half-unguessed
  Mixture of unknown memories
That thrill our minds with a vague unrest
  At the thought of some long-lost dear heart's guest.

And across my soul came the dream of the scent
  Of violets there in my escritoire
—Violets she gave me once while I bent
  My face o'er her fingers, quite content.

And the dream-scent seemed in a strange dim way
  Like the dead sweet scent of a mummied love.
Will it rise again at the Last Great Day
  With the princess here? Shall the wise dare say!

1887.

THE LADY OF THE CAPE

BEAUTY in earth and sky and air!
  In this thistle-down by the wind's breath whirled
  Even as in night's remotest world!
Beauty, beauty everywhere!

Beauty in yonder rugged rocks,
  And beauty in the weary sea,
  And beauty in the burly bee
That hums among the hollyhocks.

Stern beauty in the kingly storm,
And queenly beauty in the calm!
And beauty in my sweet sea-psalm,
And beauty in thy foam-born form!

The violet sunlight on the shoal!
The dark blue where the cloud-shadows fall!
And oh, a beauty over all—
The solemn beauty of thy soul!

TWO POETS

Love's way with the thrush;
In the heart of the larches,
The deepening defiles
Where the shadows dilate,
The dim and the hush
Of dawn in the arches
Of the dark forest aisles,
Alone with his mate!
The song would die
If the crowd were by.
It is only for one love's dewdrop is glistening;
It would frighten him voiceless to find the world listening.
Sing on, glad thrush,
From your nest in the heart of the bush!

Tho' it's only the song-smoke of love upcurled
As incense to your little brown mate,
And the world hears not, and you heed not the world,
And sing but your little heartful of love,
And know not and praise not the great kind God above—
All the same you praise him,
For love and joy are his praise—
Be elate, be elate!
God hears you and knows you are happy.

Love's way with the sea-mew;
From the rocks and the beaches,
In the spume and the spray.
O wild one, the true
Sea-poet I deem you.
The vast wind-reaches
Are a trodden way
Through the storm for you.
Do you love, I wonder,
Aught but the surge and the thunder,
The gigantic delight of the clouds and the white-maned waves
And the wind that bellows and maddens and raves,
With its passionate heart-burning,
Its mighty, insatiable yearning
For the joy it will never possess, but unceasingly craves?

Sweep along!
Song is not yours, but this free sea life is a song.
There's a wild sea mate somewhere in the cliffs—
But oh, the joy and the love of the sea!
The booming reefs and the shuddering skiffs!
Love is well; but here, O sea-lover, where your bliss is,
Can you not almost feel God's kisses?
(If you but knew, O sea-bird,
The kisses are his indeed.)
Flash on, flash on and exult! There's a true hymn hid in your glee!
Never puzzle your pate with the mystery.
God sees you fulfilling His dreaming.

O sea-mew! wise indeed
Is the life you lead.
It is well no sea-dreams intrude
On the brown bird's joy of the wood.
O poets! you never were caught
In the snare of choosing
Which well to quench thirst from, when each holds cool, sweet drink.
You each voice a thought
Out of the infinite musing
Of the great, kind God; and that, I should think,
Were enough for a thrush or a sea-mew.

New Brunswick, Canada, 1888.

A SONG OF REBELLION

BEWARE!
Ye who sit in high places!
Have a care what the morrow brings!
The kings are fallen on their faces
And ye are viler than kings.
There's a death's head at your feasts.
Your old saws are something dreary,
And the world is wellnigh weary
Of the prosing of your priests.
There's a muttering in the air.
Beware!

The chains of your slaves are stronger
Than the chains of the slaves of old.
You bind with iron no longer
But the subtler strength of gold.
Hark! hear ye not through the night
A cry like the trumpet's clangor,
The cry of the wronged in their anger,
Of the strong man in his might?
Have ye heard and not understood?—
The knife is athirst for blood.

And you—will you dare revile them,
If they use the torch and the knife?
You, who have striven to beguile them
Of the beauty and joy of life!

You have made their days an ill dream
And the sweets of their childhood bitter,
While your lemans were brave with a glitter
Of gems and a golden gleam!
O the dainty joints you have carved,
While the babes of your workmen starved!

Ye are snug and sedate in your churches
But your hearts have not known the Christ.
Your purity is offered for purchase,
And your honour is a thing that is priced.
But the wealth of your winning shall fare
At the last as wind-swept stubble.
Ye have cast away life for a bubble
That bursts at a breath of air.
Ye have bartered the things that endure,
O fools, for a lie and a lure.

Ye marry and are given in marriage
For a pitiful gift of gold
Or a coat of arms on your carriage,
As if love were a tale that is told.
Ay, the daughter is sold for pelf
And the lie on her lips does not falter,
And the pander is a priest at the altar
And the bawd is the mother herself.
Let the Law and the Church approve!
But the wife is no wife without love.

You send your priests to our alleys
To tell us that meekness wins,
And reprove us for envy and malice
And exhort us to turn from our sins.
Was it by meekness you won?
Upon whom will you dare pass sentence?
We have sinned. Who has not? Will repentance
Undo one deed that is done?
Shall we kneel in a lazy despair,
And wail at the skies in vain prayer?

We have stifled our anger and stirred not,
And ye smote us with a heavier rod;
We have called upon God and He heard not,
And ye were more heedless than God.
It is time for the turn of the tide.
Oh, masters, are ye merciless blindly?
The barons of old were more kindly—
Would God we had let them abide!
It is time for the tide to turn.
Beware, lest your patience burn!

War! War!
The world has groaned long enough
With its weariness and its pain.
Behold, are we not strong enough
To arise and shatter the chain?
Forward into the fight!

Cut a way through the ranks of error!
On—in the teeth of terror!
On—through the dark to the light!
Behind the storm is the star!
War! War!

1889.

A PATRICIAN POET

I HAVE lived too long. The new age is come with its sin and its shame,
Names with the guerdon of truth and truth becomes but a name.
Kings discrowned by the rabble and altars defiled by the schools,
And the glory of ancient wisdom a mock for the tongues of fools—

Canaille scoffing at Honor, Chivalry, Loyalty, Faith,—
They call the Ideal a phantom, and each thought of their hearts is a wraith;
Speak with a smile of dreams and dream that the world is free,
Deny the Gospel and seek a Christ in the Rule of Three.

Oh, he's a wise, broad thinker, your man of the period;
Just hear him scoff at the creeds—he has even his doubts about God;
Pshaw, there is nothing real but railways and machines;
Poetry? Loyalty? Faith? Weak props for a tower that leans!

No need of props to support the new marvelous column he rears
Built on the shifting sands, he thinks 'twill outlast the years.
Oh, how he hates intolerance!—see his eye flash at the word;
Wouldn't he make the intolerant howl, if he bore the sword!

Bah, your liberal's ever worst bigot, your broad man the narrowest ass,
Your Free Thought the true captive beating 'gainst barriers it never can pass.
Call me slave of old thoughts and old systems, sunk deep in the Old World mire!
So the world thinks, that thinks you the freeman—but the world is a pitiful liar.

That's where the evil begins—in the theories that beguile
The idle hour at the club, where the skeptical simper and smile,
Arraying the stark unbelief in the finery of culture and Art.
Fudge! the gentles but play at Free Thought, it's the mob that take it to heart.

Be sure, where a gentleman soils his patent-leathers, it's luck
If the clown that follows him doesn't plunge heels over head in the muck.
Atheism in the palace smiles in its silken coat,
But atheism in the hovel curses and cuts your throat.

Sneer at the ancients, fools,—but you'll never be half as great.
Oh, never a visionary of the ages you laugh at and hate,
Was half so deluded a dunce as your rattlepate modern fanatics,—
Do you think the millennium will come when your stable boys study quadratics?

Educate, educate, educate! 'Tis the catchword of
the age.
One would fancy you thought even anarchy might
grow quiet and sage,—
A little toy Heaven—if learned; or deemed, if the
truth you would speak,
Democracies just, as soon as the democrats all know
Greek.

Teach them and then they will rise, you say. Call
it so; but to what?
From the lowly unlettered content of the old-fash-
loned laborer's lot
To the whirl and the bustle and greed of the life
of the shop and the street—
To the filth of political intrigue, the statecraft of
trickster and cheat—

To the knowledge of murderous means that are safer
than pistol and knife—
To the discord that springs from a false note struck
in the music of life.
They who lay moored in the calm, by new blasts to
the tempest are wrenched.
What use knowing logarithms, if the light of the
stars be quenched?

What can you teach, after all? Mere scraps from the Public School,
To craze with conceit of wisdom the empty pate of a fool.
Teach them the A B C of the learning the ages have stored,—
Straightway they deem themselves able to govern as well as my lord.

Even God's providence useless—a child's help—they need it no more,
Just because they have mastered the nursery-rhymes of lore.
Public School, forsooth! Panacea for all world's wo!
Kingdom come when the schoolhouse equals the high and the low!

Mix them together, the children, so caste dies, democracy lives;
But what will you breed but mongrels, cross between gentles and thieves?
Crowd Lower and Higher together in a mad democratic uproar,—
The Lower will pull down the Higher, not the Higher ennoble the Lower,

And into the pure white souls of your high-born children shall thrust,
To creep and coil and commingle, the loathsome serpents of lust—
Ay, lust of nameless and shameless kinds—O brothers! O men!
Will ye pull down God's wrath on New Sodom? Will ye build up a New Babel again?

Oh, many an untaught peasant, far from the school and the mart,
Wise in his simple way with the silly lore of the heart,
Is far higher and nobler and better and wiser—worth more for life's work,
Than your gutter-sprung smatter-taught bullies that misrule and plunder New York.

Behind the times? It's an easy cry. Be it so, if you will;
Better behind the times, if the times are going down hill.
Did you live in the days of Nero, had you cared to keep up with the times?
Not I, tho Nero himself had sneered at my retrograde rhymes.

The world will awake some day; I know it, for God
is great.
For some good, though I guess it dimly, His people
suffer and wait.
It will all come right in the end;—God forbid that
I doubt!—but I—
I am old; I shall never see it. It is time for me
to die.

WASHINGTON, D. C.

HYMN FOR THE HOLY DAY OF ST. CATHERINE OF ALEXANDRIA

QUEEN upon earth! Ah, more, our queen in heaven!
What may men bring for gifts before thy throne?
What praise for thee, to whom God's praise is given?
O ruler of ten cities! what wrought zone
Of gold of earthly poesy, starred round
With flaming rubicels of love that yearns,
Is meet for thee whom God girds as a queen
With glory of archangels and the sound
Of sacred trumpets and the light that burns
On all the altars of thy wide demesne?
Shed thou thy grace on us
Whom the four angels
Bare through the air
To the marvellous tomb!

Turn thy fair face on us!
Teach us evangels
Newer and truer!
Lighten the gloom,
That our eyes may see clear!
Though the darkness be drear!
O Queen and Teacher, we besech thee, hear!

O thou wise Lady, whose illumined eyes
Beheld not only Moses on the Mount,
Saw not alone before thy vision rise
The royal sage whose wisdom learned to count
All world's-ways vanity that led him not
To Him who holds all worlds within His palm,
Nor the great Twain on whom Death worked no wrong!
Thou hast trodden the Stagirite's straight ways of thought
And walked with Plato on the heights of calm
And learned the strange lore of the Sibyl's song.
Each was God's voice with thee—
Hebrew or Hellen—
Light for thy sight
To discover thy Lord.
Now they rejoice with thee,
Chosen to dwell in
Aidenn, a maiden
Crowned and adored.

And we too would draw near
To salute and revere
O wise and radiant and benign one, hear!

Not only unto thee that prince of yore,
Whose psalms still girdle earth with chains of praise,
Nor he who sang the song of him who bore
God's utmost patiently, unlocked their lays;
Nor even God's poet-mother held alone
High discourse with thee. Homer also spread
On thy soul's sea the singing of his sails.
Thou hast heard devout Euripides' sweet moan
And Pindar trumpeting with uplifted head
And Sappho thrilling with the nightingales—
Sunless but glorious
Beacons unnumbered,
Bright in the night
With God's luminous breath,
Star-souls victorious
Though the dawn slumbered,
Bringing with singing
Forewords God saith.
All a-stagger we tread
In the ways where they led.
Strengthen our steps, O victress garlanded!

Now night and twilight for thine eyes are ended
In the diviner noonday of the place
When God's white sunlight makes the city splendid
With glory from the shining of His face;
Yet are the stars not lightless in that flood
Of radiance, brightening forth with steadier glow,
Their angel forms the clearlier outlined there—
The Powers and Principalities that stood
Undaunted when Heaven warred with the great Foe,
And the clear-sighted ones who made earth fair.
Thou, whom they reverence
(Thrones and dominions),
Save from the grave
Of unknowledge and night!
Face us forever hence
Dawnward, whose pinions
Weary in dreary
Doubt of the light!
Be a lamp in our way,
That our feet may not stray!
Sainted and sweet, have rue on us, we pray!

O thou who sittest ever at her feet
Whom God wrought of all creatures holiest
That she might be as spotless raiment meet
To clothe the Eternal Word with! Fair sky's-guest,

With whom the high arch-regents of the spheres
Hold interchange of sweet Olympian words—
Apollo and lute-hearted Israfel
And clear-limbed Artemis, splendid with her spears,
Uranian Aphrodite and her birds,
Serene Athene, sword-eyed Uriel!
Thou who didst seek on high
Love such as breast shall
Pour nevermore
For a mortal man's mirth!
Thou who from beacon eye,
Flaming, celestial,
Lightest our brightest
Torches of earth!
O refulgent and fair,
With the stars in thy hair!
Holy and blessed, hearken to our prayer!

Grant us thine aid that, as our footsteps wander
Down the long years, still searching for the Sign,
With no love-ruining pride our weak thoughts ponder
The deep sweet undertones of the Thought divine,
The mystery of the grasses of the field,
And the green crown of sunset in the west,
And the wind's ways that no man's feet have trod,

Till each new glory to the mind revealed
Kindle new love beneath the yearning breast
And the head's wisdom lead the heart to God—
Till, in Heaven's unity,
Loving and learning
Meet and, complete,
Are as one word, not twain,
Weak importunity
Yields to soul's spurning
And, risen from prison,
Love shakes off Time's chain.
O royal and wise!
Dædal-throned in the skies!
O crowned of God! O rose of Paradise!

November, 1887

IV

(The following ten songs have been collected from note-books, and found to be so much liked by lovers of Maeterlinck that it seems best to include them here.)

SONGS FROM THE FRENCH OF MAETERLINCK

I.

She fettered her in a cavern dour,
She set a mark upon the door,
The maid forgot the light of day
And the key fell into the sea.

She waited all the summer days,
She waited seven years or more.
Each year a passer passed the door.

She waited all the winter days,
And as she waited her golden hair
Remembered how the light was fair.

It sought it out, it found it out,
It glided out between the stones
And lighted all the rocks about.

A passer passed again one night,
He did not understand the light
And dared not draw near where it shone.

He thought it was a symbol fey,
He thought it was a golden rain,
He thought it was an angel's play,
He turned away and passed again.

II.

And if some day he come back,
  What should he be told?—
—Tell him he was waited for
  Till my heart was cold. . . .

And if he ask me yet again,
  Not recognizing me?—
—Speak him fair and sisterly;
  His heart breaks, maybe. . . .

And if he asks me where you are,
  What shall I reply?—
—Give him my golden ring;
  Make no reply. . . .

And if he ask me why the hall
  Is left desolate?
—Show him the unlit lamp
  And the open gate. . . .

And if he should ask me, then,
  How you fell asleep?—
—Tell him that I smiled, for fear
  Lest he should weep. . . .

III.

They have killed three little girls, to see
What there was in their little hearts.

The first heart was full of happiness:
And three years where'er its blood had flowed,
Three serpents hissed along the road.

The second heart was full of gentleness:
And three years where'er the blood had flowed,
Three lambs bleated in the road.

The third heart was full of wretchedness:
And three years where'er the blood had flowed,
Three archangels watched beside the road.

IV.

The maids with banded eyes
(Take off the golden bands)
The maids with banded eyes
Seek out their destinies.

The eyes are wide at noon
(Guard well the golden bands)
The eyes are wide at noon
Ah! Palace of the plains . . .

They greeted life with mirth
(Put back the golden bands)
They greeted life with mirth
And never ventured forth . . .

V.

The three blind sisters
(Hope we as of old)
The three blind sisters
With their lamps of gold . . .

Climbed the tower-stair
(They and you and we)
Climbed the tower-stair
And seven days waited there. . . .

"Oh," the first one said
(Hope we as of old)
"Oh," the first one said,
"Is it the lamp that sighs?" . . .

"Oh," the second said
(They and you and we)
"Oh," the second said,
"'Tis the King draws near." . . .

"No," the holiest said
(Hope we as of old)
"No," the holiest said,
"The lights are all dead." . . .

VI

SOMEONE came to say
(Child, I am afraid)
Someone came to say
He would go away. . . .

With my lamp alight
(Child, I am afraid)
With my lamp alight
I went through the night. . . .

And at the first door
(Child, I am afraid)
And at the first door
The flame shook with fright. . . .

At the second door
(Child, I am afraid)
At the second door
The flame spoke outright. . . .

And at the third door
(Child, I am afraid)
And at the third door
The light burned no more. . . .

VII.

THE seven daughters of Orlamonde,
When the Fairy was no more,
The seven daughters of Orlamonde
Went seeking for the door. . . .

They lit their seven lamps and sought;
Up the tower went they;
They opened thrice two hundred doors,
But nowhere found the day. . . .

They came unto the sounding vaults
That lead down to the sea;
And there above a bolted door
They found a golden key.

They saw the ocean through the chinks,
They feared they should have died;
And beat against the bolted door
But dared not fling it wide. . . .

VIII.

When he had gone
(I heard the door)
When he had gone
She had smiled . . .

But when he returned
(I heard the lamp)
But when he returned
Another was there . . .

And I have seen Death
(I heard his soul)
And I have seen Death
Who waits once more . . .

IX.

Why have you lighted all the links
—I see the sun in the garden!—
Why have you lighted all the links?
I see the sunlight through the chinks!
Open the doors to the garden!

—The keys that ope the doors are lost,
  And we must wait, and we must wait;
The three keys fell from the tower wall
And we must wait and we must wait
  And we must wait till the morrows.

The morrows will open wide the doors,
  The forest hides the locks,
The forest burns about our walls.
It is the light of the autumn leaves
  That shines on the sills of the doors—

—The morrows weary on the way;
  The morrows fear—they fear as well.
The morrows will not come this way;
The morrows die—they die as well,
  And we as well shall die. . . .

X.

THIRTY years I sought, my sisters,
  For his hiding place,—
Thirty years I walked, my sisters,
  And I found no trace . . .

Thirty years I walked, my sisters,
  Far as my feet may bear . . .
He is everywhere, my sisters,
  Yet exists nowhere . . .

Bitter is the hour, O my sisters,
  I have missed the goal.
The evening dies, too, my sisters,
  I am sick in my soul . . .

You are but sixteen, O my sisters,
  Go far from this place.
Take up my burden, my sisters,
  And seek ever his face.

I.

SIGH

(From the French of Mallarmé.)

My soul toward thy forehead, O calm sister, where
An autumn of strewn freckles dreams in the still air,
And toward the wandering heaven of thine angel eye
Mounts as, in some sad garden where the last leaves die,

Still faithful, a white fountain sighs toward the blue
—Toward the softened, pallid, pure October blue
That glasses i' the great bowls its languor without end,—
And lets the yellow sun o'er waters where the wind
Drives tawny throes of leaves that veer and cleave a cold
Furrow, in one long ray drag out its sobbing gold.

GIVERNY, August, 1897.

II.

THE FLOWERS

(From the French of Mallarmé.)

FROM the golden avalanches of the ancient Blue,
In the first day, and from the stars' eternal snow
Thou didst detach of yore great calices to strew
Upon the earth, still young and virgin yet of woe;

The tawny gladiolus, with the slim necked swans;
The laurel, sacred flower the souls of exiles wear,
Vermilion as the seraph's toe whose pureness there
Reddens in heaven with the blush of trampled dawns;

The hyacinth, the myrtle worshipped for its hues,
And, like the flesh of woman, cruel-sweet, the rose,
Herodias in bloom of the fair garden-close,
She whom a dew of fierce and glowing blood bedews;

And thou didst make the lilies with their sobbing white
That, rolling over seas of sighs it grazes on,
Through the blue incense of horizons of pale light
Mounts upward dreamily toward the weeping moon.

Hosanna on the sistrum and where the censer swings!
Our Lady, hosanna from the garden where we wait!
And let the echo die in heavenly evenings,
Looks that are ecstasies, haloes that scintillate!

III.

THE WINDOWS

(From the French of Mallarmé.)

Tired of the gloomy ward and the rank smell
That rises in the curtain's banal white
Toward the great Christ that wearies of the wall,
The sick man slyly lifts himself upright

And drags his old limbs, less to warm his sores
  Than see the sunlight on the stones and glue
The white hairs and the bones of his thin face
  Against the windows the sweet sun burns through;

And his lips, feverish, hungry for the sky,—
  As once they breathed in their delight of old,
Flesh virginal and of long since!—now grease
  With a long bitter kiss the panes' warm gold.

Drunken, he lives—forgets the dreaded priests,
  The draughts, the clock, the bed where he must die,
The cough; and when the evening bleeds i' the tiles,
  In the horizon, gorged with light, his eye

Sees golden galleys, beautiful as swans,
  Sleep on a river of purple and perfumes,
Cradling the tawny lightning of their lines
  In a large idlesse laden with old dooms.

So, seized with loathing for hard-hearted man
  Who wallows in his belly's food and runs
Headstrong to seek that filth, to offer it
  To her that gives suck to his little ones,

I flee, and clutch at every casement whence
  One turns his back on life and, benedight,
Within those panes washed with eternal dews,
  Gold with the chaste dawn of the Infinite,

Glass me, and see the angel! die, and would fain
—Be the glass Art, or light of occult powers!—
Would rise and take my dream for diadem
To the prime heaven that beauty blossoms in—

But, alas, Down-Here is master; even in this
Safe shelter haunts me, makes me sick to die,
And the foul vomit of the silly swine
Still makes me hold my nose before the sky.

Is there a way, my soul that knows the gall,
To smash the glass insulted by the Lie,
And to escape with my two plumeless wings,
At risk of falling through eternity?

THE FAUN

(From the French of Verlaine.)

An old terra-cotta Faun
Grins in the middle of the green,
Boding, no doubt, some ill to blast
The moments that with steps serene

Have led me on, and led thee on,
Pilgrims of melancholy mien,
Up to this hour whose flying past
Twirls to the sound of the tambourine.

Wolfville, 1896.

V.

DON JUAN

CANTO XVII.

DON JUAN stood upon the quarter deck—
  I'm not quite certain "quarter deck" is right,
And I dare say I'll get it in the neck
  From the dear youths who teach me how to write;
But then, it sounds so nautical—"quarter deck"!
  We must have local color: if not quite
Exact, why, many a name even critics venerate
Has been a worse sailor than I. At any rate,

On some kind of a deck Don Juan stood;
  In these new-fangled steamers I'm not sure
That any of the good old words hold good—
  Only the lurch and seasickness endure.
But Juan had sailed many seas and could
  Have passed through tempests with no qualms to cure,
Nor any loss of peace of mind, or diet.
However, at this time, the sea was quiet.

It was a night Lorenzo might have praised
  To Jessica, when those dear scamps sat purring
Of Dido and of Cressid, while they lazed
  Under the stars and heard the low winds stirring,

And gurgled in each other's ears, and gazed
  Into each other's eyes, like doves conferring,
Until that music broke upon their ears
That mingled with the music of the spheres—

That strain the world shall never hear again,
  Nor cease to hear forever. Such a night
The quivering liner with its thousand men
  Raced through, a goaded, maddened meteorite
Across the vast of calm. There was not then
  One cloud to blot the innumerable light
That made the still impeccable sky a splendour
Of armied worlds grand in supreme surrender.

Low in the North blazed sevenfold the Bear,
  Like outpost angels frontiered toward the Nought;
Far southward on the sea-line rose a-flare
  The beacon of enormous Formalhaut;
From east to west, from Rigel to Altair,
  The Milky Way arched like the Master's thought
Of what he yet will raise in cosmic masonry
To span the void, and stud with stellar blasonry.

For all along that arch of dream there flew
  The pennons of the princes of the night,
The guidons of that infinite review;
  Prone on the very waves outstretched, the might

Of huge Orion heaved itself to view;
  And higher toward the Pole the yellow light
Of Norse Capella signalled overseas
To where, below the clustered Pleiades,

Aldebaran, a fiery heart, replied
  With flame that like a shout o'erleaped the expanse;
And higher toward the zenith the red pride
  Of Algol, the star-demon, flared askance;
And higher still, in full midheaven enskied,
  Cassiopeia crowned the high advance
And seemed to pause a moment on heaven's crest
Ere she descended. Further in the West

The glory of Deneb made Cygnus kindle;
  And Vega, further south, whom sailors love,
Serene and large, made starlets seem to spindle—
  Vega, the lady of summer nights. Above
There was no moon to make the star-host dwindle;
  No planets either—'twas the 30th of
September, 1899; that night
(See the ephemeris) there were none in sight.

But Juan didn't know planets from stars;
  He only knew that under that far glory
He felt a greatness more than loves or wars
  Could bring—and both had mingled with his story;

Of both he knew the garlands and the scars
(And of most other matters transitory);
But here the shadow of the Eternal fell
About his soul, which greatened there to dwell.

The calm was in his heart as on the sea.
The Lone wherein we voyage none knows whither;
The sound of waters under the ship's lee
Confused his senses in a pleasant blither
And loosed his soul in dreamland . . . But see!
There on the starboard bow what light comes hither?
Just under Vega? Is it a new star?
Or some ship's light that hails us from afar?

Just then a fellow-passenger strolled up
With "That's Fire Island. Well, the trip was short.
To-morrow we shall be at Del's to sup.
I wonder whether Dewey is in port.
And Lipton—do you think he'll lift the cup?
Thank Fortune, we'll have news soon of some sort.
I've such a next-day's thirst for information,
I'd even be content to read *The Nation.*'

"Do you think war's declared on the Boers yet? . . ."
And Juan sighed and wished it were—internally—
And all his dreams dropped with his cigarette
O'er the ship's side. He was bored infernally,

But covered with a smile his inward fret
(His conscience wasn't so violent as to spurn a lie),
And after some discussion of Fashoda
Went to the smoking-room for Scotch and soda.

The fellow-passenger was a worthy man—
A several-millions'-worth-y-man,—had travelled
Widely (once in his own yacht to Japan)
And many knotty social coils unravelled;
Knew just which colored ties were under ban;
Cavilled at all at which his set had cavilled;
And never had one notion in his cranium
More his own than his florist's last geranium.

His father's name was Smith, and later Smythe;
He was Van Smythe, completely Knickerbockered.
His father had begun with spade and scythe;
He from his cradle had been coaxed and cockered.
His father had the wit to take his tithe
And wed a widow who was richly tochered,
But never quite got into good society;
He belonged to its most select variety.

He held within the hollow of his hand
The World—in little—that's to say, a wallet;
Gave midnight suppers delicately planned
(In this he was assisted by his valet);

Knew how to drive (and tie) a four-in-hand;
  Had wines that made a Cæsar of his palate;
Owned everything there was on earth to own,
And nothing that was really his own.

Nothing of which his thought had been a part,
  To make it more than tatters caught on trees.
Rugs, Chippendale, Johannesberger, Art—
  He paid for them but never made them his.
His dogs, perhaps, were nearest to his heart;
  But he had houses, horses, all there is.
And, what was most of all to Juan's liking,
A wife whose beauty was supremely striking.

She was a slight, red-headed type,
  With eyes like sealskin and a cheek like ermine.
Soft, lush, and deep; her lips were overripe,
  If anything—but who would dare determine?
She fenced, rode, flirted, smoked—had hit the pipe,
  They say—(but all looked dainty in her mien)—
For Ellinor (her Christian name was Ellinor)
Had twenty-seven different kinds of hell in her.

How many kinds of heaven I dare not say,—
  The heavens that women have are so improper;
And I am still determined that this lay
  Shall not at moral fences come a cropper.

True, cardboard mottoes are not much my way
  But, as Catullus says, "Who cares a copper?"
I still maintain my purpose highly moral;
As for my methods, well, we will not quarrel.

I stand with Shakespeare, not to speak of Solomon;
  My critics stand with Bowdler, Harlan, Comstock,
And though that kind may look supremely solemn on
  Occasion, they're at the bottom but a rum stock.
A man may be a virtuous though a jolly man,
  And wise without that mummery that benumbs talk,
That dull, pretentious, preternatural gravity
Those Tartuffes wear to cloak their own depravity.

These self-made bishops of the phallic crozier,
  Who roll their eyes up till they show the whites
(Why isn't that an indecent exposure?)
  These ticklish gentlemen who make war on tights,
Gloat on the coy shop-windows of the hosier,
  And peep through their own window blinds o' nights
To watch Susannah bare her dimpled knees—
And then report the case to the police.

Susannah's story is quite Biblical;
  But Ellinor Van Smythe's is much more modest—

Modern, I mean to say—but, after all,
It's much the same. Their manners were the broadest!
Our lives and gowns have a more decent fall,—
Though "modest" may too often mean but "bodiced."
But I know one or two whom these same bodices
Alone can differentiate from goddesses.

And Ellinor Van Smythe in Pre-Byzantian
Days, would have been as "noble and antique"
(I leave out "nude" because it spoils the scansion)
As the most natural and uncinctured Greek.
Indeed, here in New York, in her own mansion,
All tailor-made and boned, 'twere far to seek
A grace more lithe, free, undulant than hers,
Even in Olympus' half-clad roisterers.

The coquetry in her look was not all mocking;
'Twas half the caged thing's startle. Born a roamer
She found escape of soul in being shocking.
Witty she was, and wicked; knew her Omar,
Browning and Kipling,—yet was no blue-stocking—
(By the way, what a curious misnomer!)
All the blue-stockings ever I knew write
Wore stockings of the most indecent white.)

When I say "wicked," I don't mean to say
  Wicked in any sense of reprobation;
There was no malice mingled with her clay
  (Unless in the sly French signification);
She was only wicked in that charming way
  That drives good women to exasperation,
Because it puts them at a disadvantage.
(Men won't take trouble in this complaisant age.)

But she was serious under her frivolity,
  And in her maddest moods a mild restraint
Gave to her merriment a patrician quality
  As far from "sportiness" as from constraint.
Her joyousness was not the least like jollity,—
  St. Anthony had been ten times a saint,
Could he have seen this queen-rogue of Eve's
      daughters
Pass like a sunbeam wantoning on the waters.

And not have thrown his scourges in the Nile
  And whistled Heaven down the wind, to follow
And win, perhaps, the guerdon of her smile.
  For, after all, those dreams of his were hollow—
He knew they had no substance all the while—
  You see, St. Anthony was no Apollo,
And, as for tempting him, why, pretty women
Weren't so hard up for love as to take him in.

What, that lean, scrawny, knock-kneed, raw-boned
lubber,
Whose very fleas well-nigh gave up the ghost,
A lady-killer? Why, 'twould take a scrubber
Like Hercules to scrape him down, almost;
And nothing less than burning India-rubber
To clear the air! And all that for the boast
Of conquering a Saint? No, not even vanity
Could stomach such a satire on humanity.

Were there no gilded youth in Alexandria,
No Alciphrons nor Alcibiades,
To satisfy the taste for polyandria?
I can't believe such fairy tales as these;
No, not if Raphael, Leonardo, Andrea
And Michael Angelo combined should please
To paint that dear old subject for the nones,
And sanctify its lechery with its bones.

No, either all the painters and those crusty
Old chroniclers were guying all the while,
And Anthony was really young and lusty
And groomed and garbed the better to beguile;
Or else those girls of his were dim and dusty
Visions born of accumulated bile,
Because the poor old man had satyriasis
(You take your choice, whichever way your bias
is).

Well, I'm not Anthony—thank God for that!
  Though he's in Heaven, and I'm—where I expected.
He's sitting with the angels, singing flat;
  And I'm in hell, and not half so dejected
As you'd suppose, considering "where I'm at."
  I'm rather glad that I was not elected
And foreordained to Heaven before earth's testing,
I find that hell's so much more interesting.

In the First Canto and two-hundredth stanza,
  If, gentle reader, you'll turn back to see
How I began this famous old romanza,
  When I was something less than thirty-three
And still as much on earth as Sancho Panza
  Though not so certain I was there as he,—
You'll find I told the critics then (plague take them!)
This poem should be Epic as they make them.

Twelve books—I've changed my mind for twenty-four;
  But that is neither here nor there,—the Iliad
'S my model now; if Virgil has no more
  Than twelve, that's Virgil's fault, not mine. And will I add
Still more hereafter? That I should deplore,
  When books are Caponsacchi'd and Pompilia'd
Out of all compass. Still there is no bar at a
Length like Ramayana or Mahabharata.

I promised, too, an episode in Hades,
  Without which no true Epic is complete.
A journey through the Valley of the Shade is
  Undoubtedly the proper Epic feat,—
That hard, enamelled country where no blade is
  Nor any footprint of returning feet!
You know Æneas said it, and Ulysses,
In just such epic poetry as this is.

But when I planned to write of those obscurities
  Where Dante says the temperature's at zero
(On this point there's some conflict in authorities)
  I did not think myself to be the hero
Of that part of my poem, nor confer at ease
  With such as Nimrod there, or Nap, or Nero
(Not such as Homer, Virgil, Dante show them,—
But still it gets the next world in my poem).

But here I am, and here I'm like to stay,
  And I can save Don Juan this excursion
By giving you a rough sketch by the way
  Of my own knowledge and not mere assertion.
Hell is not what it was in Homer's day,
  And if my pictures prove a novel version
Of that dread place too much ignored of late,
Remember, that Hell, too, is up-to-date.

I died, you know, for Greece,—at Missolonghi.
Much good it ever did the Greeks or me!
It let me into ghostland by the wrong key,
And, for the Greeks, no doubt they think they're free,
Like every other independent donkey
Who grips the name and lets the substance be,
Thinking his country is more free the smaller 'tis,
And that the franchise really brings equalities.

That land is free where the inhabitants
Are free; the rest is merely oratory.
The trouble is that human history grants
No glimpse of such a land in all its story.
One slavery dies but by another's lance;
And in the process many men get glory,
But the vast millions only fresh disasters—
Monarchs or mobs—it is but a change of masters.

Muscle was King once; now the King is money.
The form of government—the world's partition—
These things are but the wax and not the honey;
"The means whereby I live" is the condition
Of Freedom as of life. It is not funny
To eat but by the other man's permission;
And it makes little difference to the stoker
If Thomas Platt be Lord or Richard Croker.

But I, at least, was true to Freedom's cause
  Even to the death (let Southy say as much!)
And, whether wise or foolish, let's not pause
  To wonder now; it had the lyric touch.
And I'd not have it other than it was.
  But the next moment I was in the clutch
Of Something, of two Somethings, pulling, hauling me,
Until I thought 'twas Scotch reviewers mauling me.

When I became a little more aware
  And they became a little out of breath,
I saw the Things that grappled with me were
  Too beautiful to be in thrall to Death,
So that I trembled, seeing them so fair,
  And like the air-drawn dagger of Macbeth
The terror of their immateriality
Shuddered my soul, still wonted to mortality.

Till I remembered I was immaterial
  As well as they, and then I grew more bold
And looked more closely at their forms ethereal.
  One was a Shape of Light, superb and cold,
And one of Darkness, passionate and imperial,
  And both of Beauty. But . . . was I not told—? . . .
Sure, not my good and evil angels these? . . .
Why, I . . . I thought the angels were all he's!

"Men have called women angels for so long
'Tis natural they should call angels women,"
I said; "but scholars know that that's all wrong.
There may be she-gods in the faith of Rimmon,
But not the Michaels of Hebraic song.
As well imagine it was a persimmon
Eve plucked in Eden, when it was an apple,
As everybody knows who's been to Chapel.

"Pray tell me, ladies, why you give the lie
To all the grave Rabbinical traditions
With such unblushing muliebriety?"
Thereat they blushed, confirming my suspicions.
"George," said the Shape of Light, "pray tell me why
We should not here, as on the earth, have missions?
In the old days, of course, we had no chance to;
But you must know we spirits are 'advanced' too."

"Men," said the darker beauty, "can no longer
Retain their old monopoly of the offices.
The cause of feminism grows daily stronger.
And though as guardian angels we're but novices,
I hope you'll find us subtler, sweeter, younger,
Than any cloistered frump that lived in Clovis's
Or Pepin's day, and knew no ways to please men
Better than Biddy has for her policemen."

"Madame," I said, "almost thou dost persuade me
To be a feminist. And, ladies both,
Since I have seen you, by the God that made me——"
(My Good Angel looked startled at the oath.)
"Since with your beauty you have both waylaid me,——"
(My fingers met the Dark One's, nothing loth.)
"Alike to heaven and hell more reconciled——"
I trod here on the other's boot, and smiled.

That finished me. My Good Angel was a prude,
And off she flew to Heaven in such a huff
I thought her manner positively rude.
Whereat my Evil Angel plucked my cuff
And—well—what other course could be pursued?
I had but her—and wasn't she enough?—
I don't complain—there was some compensation—
And that is how they settled my damnation.

Hell (but it took some time to get to Hell,
We had so much to say along the road)
Rose at the last before us, dark and fell.
Far off it lay—or squatted, like a toad—
On the horizon. Like a sudden knell
It tolled across the waters wherethrough we strode.
Low, sinister and sinuous it crouched,
As if it menaced more than it avouched.

But that was the outside; the old walls stood
  Much as they looked when first they were created;
Æons on æons have their towers withstood
  And only grown more sullen as they waited;
But they that dwell therein have changed their mood;
  The inside is completely renovated;
They speak of the old ways with an apology
And are quite up in modern criminology.

'Twas more poetical in times more pristine
  Before Lombroso led them in new paths;
It's cleaner now, and also more Philistine,
  The grim stones hid with plastered over laths
And hung with prints of Guidos and the Sistine,
  While Phlegethon is used for Turkish baths,
Dis piped and drained and turned into a dormitory
And all Hell has become one vast Reformatory.

Tartarus is a laboratory now,
  Gymnastics flourish in the meadows Stygian,
The devils are all doctors studying how
  To bring their prisoners to true religion,
And Lucifer, with spectacles on brow,
  Turned Dry-as-dust, and the whole whitewashed region
A dull régime to make poor duffers holy—
I prefer Italy and la Guiccioli.

Still it is interesting here because
  There are such interesting people—lots!
Cæsar, Petronius, Attila, Morgause,
  Nell Gwynne, Aspasia, Mary Queen of Scots,
And more good company than I can pause
  To mention, have their numbers, and their cots.
And Heaven is much more boresome, so they say,—
A sort of middle-class Y. M. C. A.

Besides, this criminology's a fad;
  Nordau has killed it. Even now a faction
O' the younger twentieth-century devils, glad
  Of any change, is threatening reaction.
And after the carbolic we have had,
  Even brimstone would be welcome for olfaction.
I even note some restlessness in Lucifer—
He feels he's not the part—as well play crucifer!

But here we are—and here I am (at present)
  Number nine thousand million and nineteen,
My photograph's been taken, looking pleasant;
  And filed with notes describing dress and mien,
What moles I have and where, and what malfeasant
  Mattoidal marks are on my person seen,
Full measurements by the Bertillon system,
And many other matters to assist 'em.

The only punishments that still remain
  Are those that fit the crime, Mikado-fashion;

Each still pursues his vision, and in vain,
(Even after death persists the ruling passion);
Midas must still heap useless gain on gain,
And hapless love make Romeo's cheek grow ashen;
Napoleon still leads armies—to his ruin,
And I continue still to write Don Juan.

Now if you ask me why I don't go on
Where I left off, and finish up the story
Of how the Duchess played the ghost for fun
And whether friendship grew more amatory
In Lady Adeline and that other one—
Who was so innocent and pinafore-y—
What was her name?—well, anyhow, you see,
I forget what that story was to be.

Dying has put it all out of my head,—
You see, it's quite an incident to die,
And the excitement of it broke the thread
Of what I had in mind to write. So I
Must let dead cantos bury their own dead
And write of what the public wants to buy.
Southy's forgotten; so is Castlereagh;
But there are fools and scoundrels still to-day.

I'm just as well informed as a New Yorker
Of Wall Street, Waldorf, Tammany, what not;
We've a brand-new kinetoscope—a corker—
It's just as good as being on the spot—

A ticker gives the latest price of pork or
  Of Atchinson—or any other lot—
And when we're bored with happenings infernal
We read the extras of *The New York Journal.*

So I commence anew my song extemporary,
  And if you think it strange that I who died
In '24, so soon become contemporary
  With you of '99, that's quite beside
The question. Here we know not of things temporary;
  Past, future, present, all with us abide;
In Hell a thousand years are as a day
(It's also true if turned the other way.)

We, being out of time,—but then you wouldn't
  Be able to understand me if I told you—
I couldn't when on earth (but I'm no student
  And never was) . . You see, Time doesn't enfold you;
You enfold Time. But, really, it's imprudent
  To talk of metaphysics. Why, a cold dew
Starts on my brow when I see Kant draw nearer . . .
Just ask Tom Davidson to make this clearer.

* * * * * * * * *

1899

VI

PARTING

Gone, and I spoke no word to bid her stay!
Gone, and I sit benumbed and scarce can rise;—
Gone with the light of new love in her eyes,
The splendid promise of the fervent day.
She loves me, Ocean, loves me! And I may
Not lisp the whisper of my great surprise,
Save to the waves and pebbles and the skies
And to the sea-gulls circling in the spray.
She loves me! Till she went I did not know
Her soul. This is a mystery which no art
Can picture and no wisdom understand.
And she is gone and I beheld her go,
With so much awe at sight of her pure heart
I dared not kiss the fingers of her hand.

KRONOS

As one of those huge monsters of the sky,
Fierce with the flame of fiery floating hair,
Falls from the zenith through the upper air,
Threatening the planets from their paths on high,
Jarring creation from its harmony,
Spreading on earth destruction and despair,
Affrighting men to temples and vain prayer,
So from the summit of his majesty

He falls, and heaven is shaken as flame. Zeus reigns,
  Usurping; and no matter what is left—
How smooth or tangled grows his god-life's weft—
  With how swift footing or how slow the years
Speed on, for him forever there remains
  A thunder and a chaos in the spheres.

1883.

TO PROF. C. F. RICHARDSON

(For the dedication of a book.)

Such as the seashore gathers from the sea—
  Shells whose glad opal sunlight makes more glad,
  And dead men's bones by bitter seaweed clad—
  Teacher and friend, these songs I send to thee.
Gay things and ghastly mingled, seem to me
  Here are alike; the merry and the sad,
  The trivial and tragic, good and bad,
  For so I find the ways of life to be.
Evil and good are woven upon the loom
  Of fate in such inextricable wise
  That no man may be bold to judge and say,
"This thing is good, that evil," till the day
  When God shall blazon on regenerate skies
  The justice of His pardon and His doom.

A YOUTHFUL POET TO HIS CRITICS

METHINKS I hear those dull men murmuring on:
"Not half bad,—really, rather melodious,—
But then he sighs too much, is ominous,
All minor-keyed, the pathos overdrawn.
There's woe enough i' the world"—this with a yawn—
"Why must our songs be likewise dolorous?
No nightingales! The lark 's the bird for us!"
Ah, my poor fellows, it is night. When dawn
Clarions in the east and waits an answering word,
Then shall you hear the loud-resounding lark,—
Yea, Israfel, passioning like the Arabian bird
Whose heart of flame bore fruit of ancient tales,
Shall thrill the very seraphim to hark.
But now—content you with the nightingales.

May, 1888.

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI

GONE art thou, then, O mystical musician!
Pure thoughted singer of these sinful years!
No more shall dreams and doubts and hopes and fears
Pass and re-pass before thy stricken vision;

No more from thine high sorrowing position
Shall fall thy song—irradiated tears;
Alas! no more against our listening ears
Shall new lays ring from thy lone lute Elysian.
For unto thee at last has rest been given,
Whether in sleep eternal by the shore

Of Time's wide ocean, or in song without
Or break or flaw, by the gold bar of that heaven,
From which the blessed Damosel leaned out,
Sighing for thee in the sad days of yore.

TO SWINBURNE

I

POET! thou art to me a faery king
Dwelling in some weird place of witchery,
Some garden where unnumbered roses vie
In color with the hollyhocks that spring
On every side in scarlet wantoning
And lilies 'neath the gaudier herbage lie
And violets unclose their leaves near by
While stately sunflowers guard each opening.
And in that garden-realm magnificent
I often see thee walking—stopping now
To list to hollow murmurs, now to scent
Some flower's subtile perfume, wherein pent,
A rich, rare pleasance lies that none but thou
And thy strange fellow-bard, the wind, can know.

TO SWINBURNE

II

Oft, too, I see thee on the rocky shore,
  Worshiping all the infinitely strong
  Grand godhead that to ocean doth belong,
  Or prostrate with uncovered head before
The sun, whom even Ocean doth adore,
  Who giveth speech to every poet's tongue,
  Who is the only king and god of song,
  From whom all bards receive their secret lore.
For thou art brother of the elements;
  There is a spirit of kinship that compels
  Thy feet to stray in paths where nothing dwells
Save the triune power that knows nor death nor birth
  But sways all nature in omnipotence—
  Sea, wind and sun, the gods who rule the earth.

PER ASPERA AD ASTRA

To Amélie Rives.

There is no heart that sorrows not. The higher
  The path winds for our feet o'er shards and stones
  The sharper cuts the stinging wind that moans

And wails for rage of unattained desire.
They that are struggling in the lower mire,
  For all their sorrowing, never know the groans,
  The Mutius-agony, the dread monotones
Of Golgotha, that whoso would aspire
Must shudder with throughout earth's period.
  Crowned Poet! read God's message through the storm;
    "Yea, there shall pierce thine own heart, too, a sword;
  For Art, like Mary, handmaid of the Lord,
  Tears out of her own quivering flesh the form
To clothe the unseen and living Word of God.

WASHINGTON, 1888.

A REMNANT REMAINETH

To AMÉLIE RIVES.

AMID this clamor of the silly throng
  Who boast that they have wrought true counterpart
  Of Nature's face—ah me, they miss her heart!—
Who scoff at them that for God's music long
And for the love of beauty suffer wrong,
  Who would turn Helicon into a mart
  And smite with Cromwell-stroke the throat of Art

And slay with Judas-kiss the lips of Song,
My heart leaps up when I behold afar
  A new hand stretched to take the torch of Truth,
  Which seer and saint pass down from age to youth
  To light the future Temple's inner shrines.
Across the dusk I see and name a star;
  Pray God that Phosphor and not Hesper shines.

WASHINGTON, 1888.

MATTHEW ARNOLD

THERE was a poet in him. But his art
  Grew too faint hearted to withstand the strain
  And turmoil of the age. He sought to gain
  Peace only; all the passion of his heart
He slew, that, a little space apart
  For quiet of his soul he might attain;
  And so the poet in him fell self-slain,
  Sang its own swan-song and was not. O heart!
He has found a deeper peace than he pursued
  And his worn eyes at last behold the ways
  That open for man's limitless up-leaping;
And God's voice softly wakes his poethood
  Anew, as the Master bent of old to raise
  The dust that loved him, saying: "Not dead, but sleeping."

VII

(This group, which has been called the last sonnets, was written with a dramatic sonnet sequence in mind.)

MAN AND CRAFTSMAN

To Marna.

Trust not my words, for I can sing as sweet
To any woman as I sing to you.
Oh, pick me out a trull, a fright, a shrew,
That I may praise her as an artist's feat
And show how much my mastery is complete
By making the impossible ring true!
Yet I will not do this, which I might do,
Nor lay no lying song at alien feet.
—But you, if you would know me true indeed,
Trust not my songs, albeit they do not lie;
Try me by nothing but my naked soul,
Try me by nothing but that deathless deed—
For if I stood by you in act to die,
I could not speak myself more clean and whole.

August, 1898.

MODELS

To Marna.

So memory and imagination bring
Their beauty to my dreams—for some I knew,
And some I guessed at, looking at the blue
Of the elusive sea and wondering.
Dear women with vain beauty vanishing,

I hold them for a moment in my view
And try if I may catch some little clew
To understand their mystery as I sing.
Dear women loved in fancy or indeed,
Dear loves and loves of dreams, I set them there
To find one note of all they echo of;—
But of such easel hours take thou no heed,
No, though I stripped their flushing spirits bare.
My models they, but only thou my love.

August, 1898.

THE LAST LOVE OF GAWAINE

You will betray me—oh, deny it not!
What right have I, alas, to say you nay?
I, traitor of ten loves, what shall I say
To plead with you that I be not forgot?
My love has not been squandered jot by jot
In little loves that perish with the day.
My treason has been ever to the sway
Of queens; my faith has known no petty blot.
You will betray me, as I have betrayed,
And I shall kiss the hand that does me wrong.
And oh, not pardon—I need pardon more—
But in proud torment, grim and unafraid,
Burn in my hell nor cease the bitter song
Your beauty triumphs in forevermore.

July, 1898.

WHAT THOUGH YOU LOVE ME

WHAT though you love me? Have you no caprice
Would kill my heart if I but knew of it?
What kisses did you leave me to commit?
Through the long nights and days I have no peace
To think your hand may lie without release
One little moment, somewhere, where you sit—
You two—you and the other—fingers knit
Together while all words an instant cease!
Who he may be I know not—and I know
You love me, yes, you love me; but my mind
Is a dark wood where nightsome shadows start.
My hand is nervous as with daggers—Oh!
The jealousy that chokes and makes me blind!
The brooding menace of my bitter heart!

July, 1898.

HURT ME

HURT me! For your dear sake I could be driven
With whips of scorpions, and smile at Fate.
Hurt me! It greatens me—it greatens even
The love I have that is already great.
If you were always dear and sweet and true,
And came to me with kisses and delight,
How could I show the love I have for you,

How could that love attain its highest height?
Hurt me, and spare not! I am yours for joy,
And yours a hundred fold, then, for despair.
I would not change my rack for any toy
That sleek Antinous tosses in the air.
  Ay, hurt me! For your sake I will endure
  To make my pain the page to your amour.

FALSE TRUTH

Oh! stab me with denial of your love,
But do not torture me in this slow hell
Of thoughts I dare not tell the stars above,
Of fears I dare not hear the night winds tell!
If this be truth, oh! tell me any lie,
And I will wear my heart upon my sleeve,
Build me an altar where the words may lie
And make it my religion to believe!
But let it not be truth that you should give
Accustomed kisses lest a robber lack,
Not filch from Love his high prerogative
That Mercy wear false ermine on her back!
  Let him be starved—and starve me if you will—
  But not for less than love smite love and kill!

August, 1898.

LOVE AND PITY

ARE you too tender-hearted to be true?
True to your love, to me and your own soul?
Will you for pity give what is love's due
And leave love lorn and begging for a dole?
Then pity is a thief, that steals love's purse
To squander in dishonest charity;
Then love is outcast, with the exile's curse
Who sees his varlets loot his seigneury.
Is love so hard it recks not where I lie,
While pity melts at aught that he endures?
I deserve nothing, save that you ensky
No other with those vesper lips of yours—
I deserve nothing; but your love of me
Deserves of you the courage to be free.

August, 1898.

LOVE'S SILENCE.

I DO not ask your love as having rights
Because of all there is between us two.
Love has no rights, Love has but his delights,
Which but delight because they are not due.
The highest merit any man can prove
Is not enough to merit what Love gives,
And Love would lose its quality of love,

Lived it for any cause but that it lives.
Therefore I do not plead my gentle thought,
My foolish wisdom that would make you free.
My sacrifice, my broken heart be nought,
Even my great love itself, the best of me!
Martyr of Love, I see no other way
But to keep silence in your sight, and pray.

AU SEUIL

Le destin nous a pris de sa main forte,
Il nous a pris en plein soleil, soudain,
Il nous a pris avec son haut dédain
Et il nous a montré la sombre porte
Où nous ne pouvons qu'entrer. Il nous porte
Jusqu'au seuil!—Maintenant, (oh lourde main!)
Nous connaissons le secret du chemin
Comme on connait l'âme d'une amie morte.

Au delà de ce seuil quel noir aux dents,
Quel inconnu terrible nous attend?
Peut-être—l'âme de l'homme est si folle!—
On rencontrera le sourire d'un dieu
Qui nous bénira de ses grands yeux bleus
Et nous rassurera de ses mains molles.

Gouldsboro, *September*, 1898.

Launcelot & Guenevere

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